

Kent County Council

COUNTRYSIDE and COASTAL ACCESS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

(DRAFT JANUARY 2013)



Version 1.1

Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan

A strategic framework for walking, cycling and riding in Kent

Foreword

Welcome to Kent County Council's Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan, Kent's strategy for accessing and enjoying the countryside and coast on foot, on bike and on horseback. This is the five yearly review of the county's original plan of 2007, setting out the public's aspirations for accessing and enjoying Kent's beautiful and diverse landscapes.

This plan is founded upon extensive public consultation and feedback and its priorities are based on the views of the residents of Kent. It also takes into account the recent public backlash to the national consultation on Forestry and the overwhelming evidence that walking, riding and cycling brings significant benefits to the health and economy of the nation.

Kent is fortunate to have a vast network of Public Rights of Way and open green space which have played an important role in the history and culture of the county. The role of this valuable resource is ever changing and today it serves a purpose as important as any in the past; not only providing a recreational outlet free to the public, but also helping to address increasing concerns over traffic congestion.

In reviewing the plan the PROW and Access Service has also taken the opportunity to re-define operational priorities and build on the significant efficiencies already found in response to the economic climate.

These are ambitious challenges but issues we know Kent residents feel passionate about and they contribute significantly to our prime objective; to make Kent a healthy, enjoyable and attractive place in which to live and work.

Mike Hill

Cabinet Member Customer and Communities

Foreword.....	2
Part 1: Delivering Access in Kent.....	5
About this Plan.....	5
The Review of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2007	5
Delivering the Customer Service Strategy	6
Understanding our customers	6
Connecting with our customers	8
Empowering our staff to meet customer expectations	10
Better designed service delivery	10
Enhanced partnerships	10
Delivering Wider Public Benefit.....	12
Helping the Kent Economy to Grow	12
Tackling Disadvantage.....	16
Putting the Citizen in Control.....	18
Legislative and Policy Context	21
Introduction	21
Delivering Kent's Priorities	21
Responding to National Legislation and Policy	31
Kent's Access Resource	36
Public Rights of Way	36
Accessible Green Space.....	41
Open Access.....	42
Village Greens and Commons	43
Part 2: Evaluation of Use, Demand and Public Benefit	44
Section 1: Use, Demand and Public Benefit of Countryside Recreation.....	45
Introduction	45
Walking	46
Cycling	51
Horse Riding and Carriage Driving	57
Motorised vehicles	61
Section 2: Use, Demand and Public Benefit in Under-Represented Groups	63
Introduction	63
People with a Disability	64
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Groups	68
Younger Residents.....	70
Part 3: Implementation	73

Action Plan (Objective and Actions)	73
How the Plan is Prioritised.	73
The Main Objectives	73



Part 1: Delivering Access in Kent

Context, Customers and Public Benefit

About this Plan

This plan sets out a bold and visionary approach to providing access to Kent's countryside for the benefit of all of Kent's residents.

This is an interim plan, updating Kent County Council's Countryside Access Improvement Plan of 2007. The plan covers four years, from 2013 to the end of the original term of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan in 2017.

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, highway authorities are required to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. These plans must assess the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public, as well as the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and leisure. Such plans must also assess the accessibility of Public Rights of Way to blind or partially-sighted people and others with mobility problems. This updated Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan is written in accordance with this duty, and forms Kent County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Kent's Public Rights of Way and Access Service is committed to providing the best access to the countryside for Kent's residents. The services provided are wide ranging and Kent's residents come into contact with them in many ways. Not only do they provide the means to enjoy Kent's varied and beautiful landscapes, they also help to improve health & well-being, to build sustainable and self-supporting communities and to support Kent's economy.

This forward-thinking plan sets out how all of these benefits will be delivered and how the future needs of Kent's residents will be met: supporting local communities, building a strong economy and benefiting the health and well-being of Kent's residents.

The document is presented in three parts:

- Part 1: Delivering Access in Kent – Customers, Context and Public Benefit
- Part 2: Evaluation of Use, Demand and Public Benefit
- Part 3: Implementation

The Review of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2007

The Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2007-2017 was the first such plan produced by Kent County Council. It has since guided the work of the **PROW and Access Service**, giving clear direction and focus.

Much has been learned during the first five years of delivering the Countryside Access Improvement Plan. There have been many successes including the Countryside Access Wardens Scheme, the 'Walk to Win' campaign which engaged with customers in areas of high deprivation and the use of cutting edge technology in the I-Phone App. This plan sets out some bold ambitions, not necessarily constrained by the resources available, but on meeting the needs of customers. It is undeniable that changes in the availability of resources for local government delivery has, and will continue to have, an impact. Reductions in funding levels are likely to continue for years to come, and will create

new challenges for service delivery. The **PROW and Access Service** recognises this reality, and has restructured to enable it to continue to deliver innovative and forward looking projects.

The **PROW and Access Service** has always been customer focused, and the recent move of the **Service** into the Customer and Communities Directorate has provided an opportunity to demonstrate this clearly. Allied to this, during the last few years, the **Service** has greatly increased understanding of its customers and, through this revised plan, will put this understanding into practice.

Delivering the Customer Service Strategy

Understanding our customers

Our customers are the general public, landowners, businesses and stakeholder partners and often have conflicting concerns and a complex diversity of interest and opinions. The first Countryside Access Improvement Plan in 2007 was developed from comprehensive consultation with our customers. During this consultation 2500 requests for projects were received, which directly led to the development of priority actions. Since then, the **PROW and Access Service** has delivered against these priorities, with annual reports tracking progress. It has carried out in depth research, including surveys, to increase understanding of its customers.

The contents of this plan and corresponding objectives are a direct response to customer suggestions and feedback, putting the customer at the heart of what we do.

The population of Kent is predicted to grow from 1.45 million people in 2012 to 1.54 million in 2022. This overall increase of 96,000 people, some 6% change in the population, will not be evenly spread across the county and four local authority areas will account for 80% of the population growth. Ashford is expected to grow by 25%, becoming home to an extra 31,000 people, while Dartford, Dover and Gravesham are expected to increase by a total of 43,000 across the three areas.¹ Conversely, the population of Canterbury, Sevenoaks, Thanet and Tunbridge Wells is predicted to remain relatively static.

The **PROW and Access Service** needs to respond to this population growth. The concentration of this increase in certain geographical areas will lead to greater pressures on the countryside access resource, which will require intervention to ensure that the level and standard of provision is sufficient.

New comprehensive national research by Natural England² has helped to increase understanding of outdoor visits, providing in depth data about who visits, where they go, what they do and why they choose not to participate.

Alongside this the **PROW and Access Service** has used the customer profiling tool Mosaic³ to understand its customers better. This powerful tool provides detailed and accurate understanding of the demographics, lifestyles and behaviours of customers.

¹ Predicted population increase by 2022: Dartford 20,000 (21%), Dover 13,000 (12%), Gravesham 10,000 (10%)

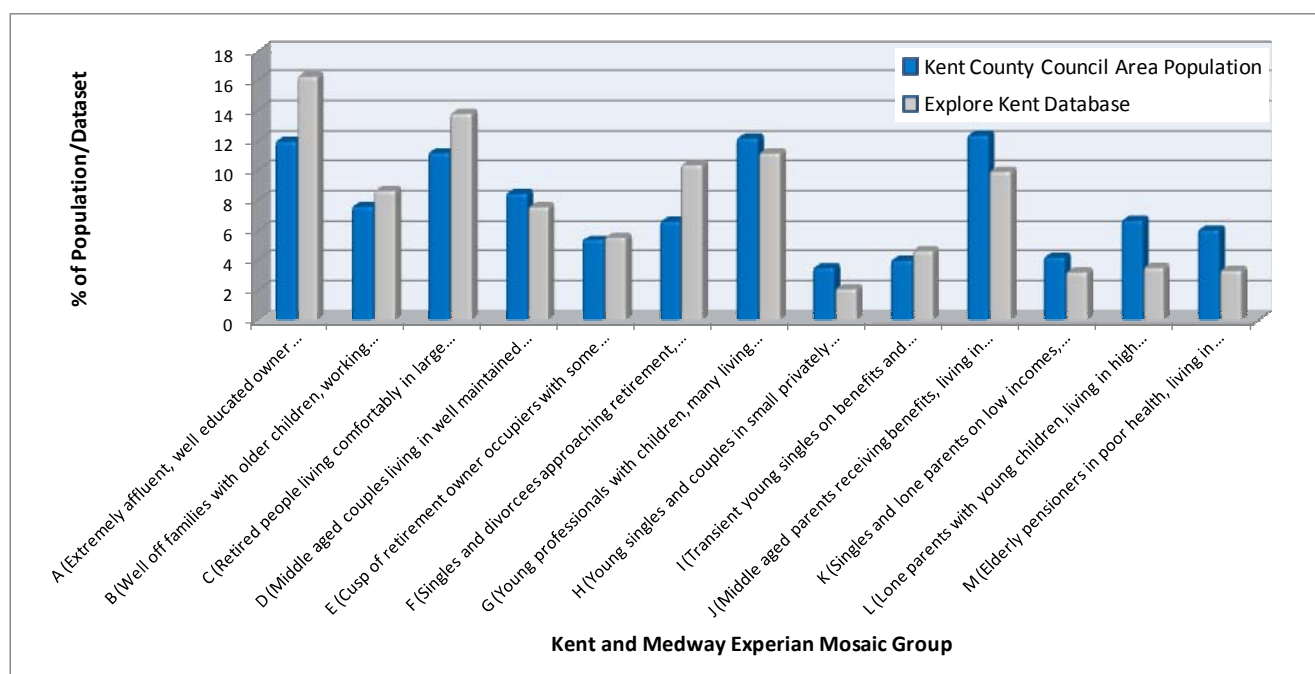
² Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE)

³ Experian™ Mosaic

This tool has been used to examine the whole customer database, which includes those registering rights of way queries, those requesting information from 'Explore Kent' and 'Visit Kent' and people participating in specific campaigns. The data has shown uptake of the **Service** from people across all of the Kent and Medway Mosaic groups.

The national research by Natural England shows that, while people from all sectors of the population visit the outdoors, the proportion of those visiting the countryside is greater in the higher socio-economic groups and in the age range of 45 to 64.

Nonetheless, a wide range of Kent's population has registered interest through Explore Kent. Four Mosaic groups make up 52% of Explore Kent customers. While, in line with what would be expected from the national research, these groups undoubtedly represent sectors of Kent's population which are in general in the higher socio-economic groups, they also represent a wide range of ages, with 11% being younger couples with families. The results are shown in the table below.



Demand for access to the countryside is explored in more detail in the section 'Use, Demand and Public Benefit of Countryside Recreation' but, as a general trend, demand for and interest in the countryside and visiting the outdoors continues to increase.

The customer base for the **PROW and Access Service** is likely to continue grow, partly due to an increase in interest, and partly simply due to the fact that Kent's population will increase.

Objectives will be set to continually review the contact we receive from our customers to further inform our understanding of their requirements. The Service will continue to engage with representatives from the main recreational access User Groups and develop 'champions' to increase understanding of under-represented groups.

Actions to understand our customers

- Provide intelligent analysis of customer contact so that resources are focussed on those areas that matter to them

- Provide information and relevant signs to encourage responsible use and support landowners in protecting their interests.
- Within the PROW and Access Service develop 'champions' to further the understanding of the needs of under-represented groups. Use this understanding to promote engagement of these groups in the countryside, both within Kent County Council and with stakeholders and partners.

Connecting with our customers

Increasing customers will also result in more interactions with the **Service**. The **PROW and Access Service** sets targets for responding to rights of way enquiries and problems. It is seeking to move more of its customer reporting to an easy to use web based service (CAMS). Growth in demand has exceeded the capacity of the service to meet all of the requests made of it. The Service therefore prioritises service requests to focus on those routes most used and valued by customers.

Kent's PROW and Access Service has over 90,000 customer interactions each year

The success of projects such as the "app" and "Countryside Access Wardens" has clearly demonstrated that customers respond positively to engagement when it is developed in their language. Development of a variety of methods of communication should ensure the Service reaches its maximum audience. An increasing understanding of our customer profile and use of Mosaic analysis will ensure customers are contacted in the way they prefer.

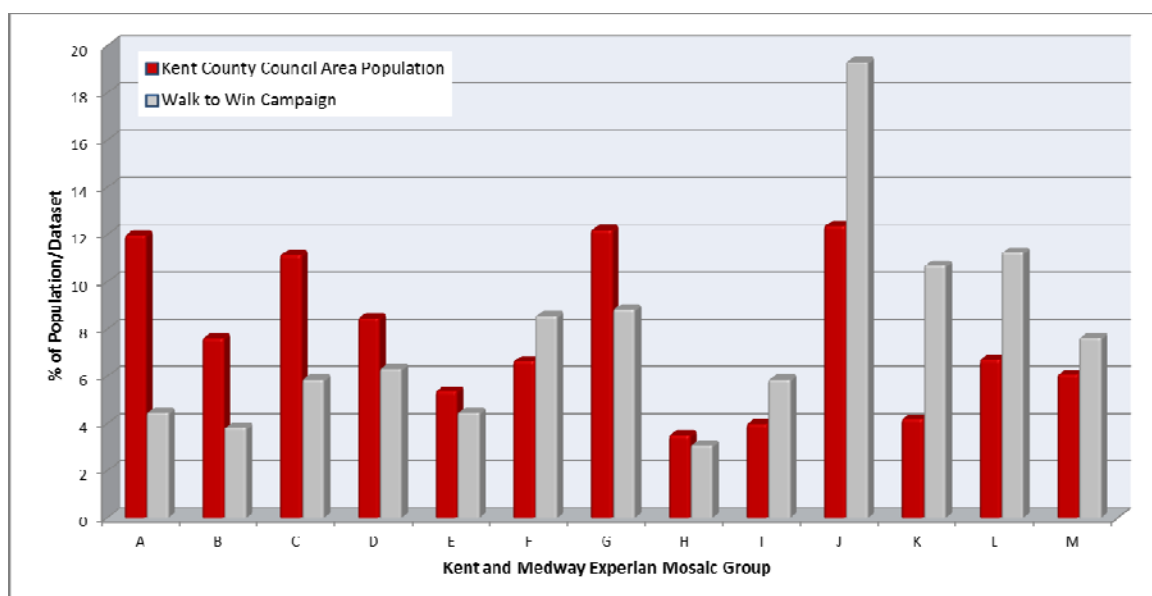
"Just downloaded the @ExploreKent Iphone App - it's fab! Going to go out for a walk tomorrow using it.."

Laura Ellis

Nationally, disabled people, younger adults, those in black and minority ethnic and lower socio-economic groups are less frequent visitors to the outdoors. Increasing engagement from these sectors of population requires overcoming the barriers of transport, culture, income and poor health.



People in lower socio-economic groups in Kent,⁴ as in the rest of England, mainly live in urban areas and have poor health as well as low incomes. Natural England's research⁵ shows that when they visit the outdoors, it tends to be within one mile of their starting point and therefore, unsurprisingly, urban areas close to home are the most common destination rather than the wider countryside promoted through 'Explore Kent' and the rights of way network. Day-to-day engagement in the **PROW and Access Service** would also therefore be expected to be lower. While across the whole customer profile this is true, Explore Kent records 'average' or 'above average' numbers of these customers in the local authority areas of Shepway, Thanet and Dover, suggesting that the **Service** is reaching these customers. The Service is committed to improving engagement and facilities for this sector, to improve the health and quality of life for those residents most in need



How the **PROW and Access Service** will work to overcome the barriers to participation of these potential customers is explored in detail in 'Section 2: Use, Demand and Public Benefit in Under-Represented Groups'.

Actions to connect with our customers

- Use the customer profiling and Mosaic data provided in this report to continually improve our communication channels so our customers receive contact in the way they prefer
- Work closely with health care professionals to promote the health benefits of using Public Rights of Way
- Provide support and guidance to landowners, to ensure they are aware of their legal responsibilities

⁴ Represented generally by Mosaic profiles J (middle aged parents receiving benefits), K (singles and lone parents on low incomes), L (lone parents with young children in social housing), M (elderly pensioners in poor health)

⁵ Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE)

Empowering our staff to meet customer expectations

Regular training will result in staff being empowered and confident in their decision making. Objectives have been set to ensure staff are equipped with the right skills and knowledge to deliver this Plan.

The Service will encourage and support innovative approaches to customer service through the appraisal process.

Actions to empower staff

- Ensure high levels of customer service are maintained through staff training
- Increase understanding by businesses and service providers of how to offer a quality service to walkers, cyclists and others seeking outdoor recreation
- Lead a strategic approach to expand the leisure walking and cycling market in Kent in order to increase economic benefit, including improving understanding of the resource and development needs
- Embrace new technology and procedures in delivering an effective service.

Better designed service delivery

The restructuring of Regulatory Services provided an opportunity to look at alternative delivery models. Sharing best practice, experience and resources will improve efficiency across the Service. The use of new and emerging technologies should be developed to reduce the need for human intervention whilst ensuring there is no loss to customer service.

Actions to achieve better designed service delivery

- Regularly review our policies and procedures to maintain efficiency and improve customer service
- Ensure a high level of customer service is maintained through staff training and increase understanding by businesses and service providers of how to offer a quality service to walkers, cyclists and others seeking outdoor recreation
- Retain community involvement as a key element of service delivery and continue to develop the Countryside Wardens Scheme expanding the roles of individual wardens, linking with Sustrans to include cycling wardens
- Embrace new technology and procedures in delivering an effective service.

Enhanced partnerships

The Action Plan at the end of this document sets out objectives that are in direct response to customer consultation. Against each objective potential and existing partner organisations have been identified. In light of clear reductions to available central funding, it is imperative that new partnerships are formed and existing ones strengthened in order to deliver the ambitious outcomes of this plan.

The Service already has a well established partnership network. This is a major asset to service delivery and should be maintained and developed to assist in the delivery of the Service's operations, particularly in times of reduced budget. As well as the direct users of the countryside and rights of way, the businesses of Kent, especially tourism businesses, are also customers of the **PROW and Access Service**. Explore Kent through the promotion of

walking, cycling, horse riding and other countryside recreation activities are a significant element of the tourism offer for Kent. Partnerships in this area should be continued, working with “Visit Kent” and the district authorities to ensure Kent’s recreational tourism offer is accessible and inspiring and continues to evolve to support and encourage growth in the rural economy.

The creation of Community Champions will be set as an objective to ensure there is a clear and direct connection between the Service and the various partners and customers.

Actions to deliver enhanced partnerships

- Continue to support the Kent Countryside Access Forum, and seek to ensure that it remains inclusive and effective
- Support the development and implementation of the Kent Downs and High Weald AONB plans, the County Councils Environment Strategy and District Transport and Green Infrastructure Policies
- Establish Community Champions that deliver an annual programme of presentations/engagements with specifically targeted groups
- Develop closer links to Parish Council’s who may be in a position to support locally important projects through the Community Infrastructure Levy or a higher precept.

Delivering Wider Public Benefit

The work of the **PROW and Access Service** touches the lives of Kent's residents in many ways. It is obvious that at the most basic level the rights of way network provides free opportunities for all Kent's residents, should they chose to take them, to enjoy Kent's countryside and coast. It is perhaps not as immediately obvious that the impact is much wider.

Access to the countryside and walking, cycling and equestrian activities provide significant support to Kent's economy.

Access to green space is a significant factor in enabling people to improve their health and well-being.

Despite the name, the **Service does not only operate in the countryside; it provides important links both within towns and out to the wider countryside. In short, the work of the **Service** in its entirety enhances the quality of life of Kent's residents.**

Kent County Council's medium term plan "Bold Steps for Kent" sets out the ambitious changes required by the public sector in order to meet the challenges ahead. There are three core aims running through "Bold Steps for Kent", echoing the themes of Kent's Community Strategy 'Vision for Kent':

- To Help the Kent Economy to Grow
- To Tackle Disadvantage
- To Put the Citizen in Control

The wider public benefits of the **Service** are explored in more detail below, using the three aims of "Bold Steps for Kent".

Helping the Kent Economy to Grow

In South East England, the 143 million annual leisure walking trips bring £2.7 billion to the region.

Countryside recreation is a fundamental pillar supporting the Kent tourism 'Garden of England' brand.

Rural tourism businesses in Kent regard cycling and walking as markets with the potential to develop.

Reconnecting people with nature delivers clear benefits to public health and the economy. A good quality environment is associated with better mental health, reduced stress and increased physical and economic activity.

Kent's attractive countryside is a key motivator for people choosing to visit, with 47% of visitors stating it was one of the main reasons why they came.⁶ When visitors are in Kent, the landscape is fundamental factor in choosing the type of activities they like to do, with 46% saying they enjoy walking, 9% cycling, 42% visiting a country pub and 19% trying local produce. Research into visitors to the Kent Downs AONB⁷ and High Weald AONB show that the main reason they choose to come is to walk in the countryside.⁸

Countryside recreation activities are a fundamental component of the economy. According to 'The Volume and Value of Walking and Cycling in the South East Region' report by Tourism South East, there are estimated to be nearly 143 million walking trips for leisure made annually in South East England. The expenditure associated with these trips is in the region of £2.7 billion. The same report estimates that nearly 18 million cycling trips are made in South East England, generating an estimated £345 million.



Countryside recreation has a range of important roles in supporting the visitor economy, and the provision of quality, well promoted and accessible routes adds to the combined tourism 'offer'. It is also a crucial pillar supporting Kent's current marketing focus as the 'Garden of England'.

Given the importance of the countryside as a decision making factor for potential visitors, a quality offer targeted to key markets is crucial in attracting people to Kent rather than competitor areas, and will bring more spend into the county. Detailed information on countryside activities helps visitors build a picture of what is available and also supports visitors deciding to take a short break rather than just a day trip; a key ambition for Kent as this leads to greater spend per visitor. As the gateway to Europe, and bordering the mass population of London, Kent is an ideal location for developing recreational tourism.

Countryside recreation activities also help to mobilise spend into the rural economy. The promotion of local businesses, such as pubs, local producers and attractions, can help this economic benefit to stay within the local economy, helping to support essential services.

Rural businesses themselves recognise the importance of walking and cycling in supporting their businesses. In a survey of rural east Kent businesses in 2011, around 1 in 5 businesses

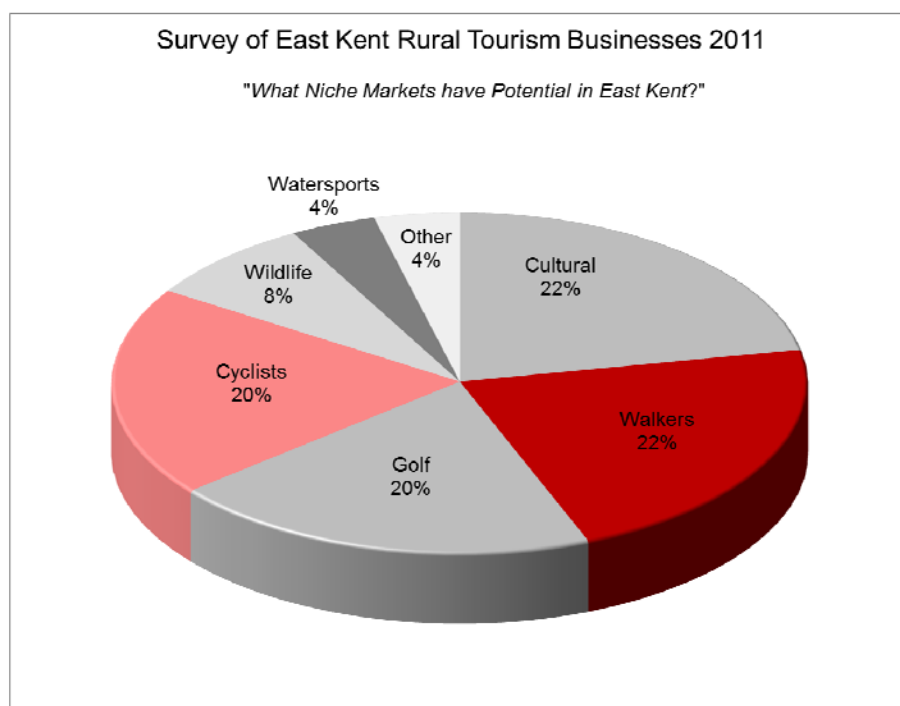
⁶ Visit Kent

⁷ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

⁸ South East Protected Landscape Visitor Baseline Research (2009)

regarded walking and cycling as markets with potential to develop, the same level as those who saw potential in the perhaps more obvious east Kent offers of 'culture' and 'golf'.⁹

"The Natural Choice" White Paper evidence suggests clear benefits to public health and the economy of reconnecting people with nature. A good quality environment is associated with better mental health, reduced stress and increased physical activity and economic activity.



The popularity of the Kent countryside for walking has already been demonstrated as being a hugely valuable asset to the rural economy and, recognising this, two of Kent's towns have specifically targeted the walking tourism market. Deal has been accredited as a "Walkers are Welcome" town and Faversham has developed a series of circular walks that connect to local enterprise and tourism initiatives. The Faversham walks project, for example, is estimated to have attracted £148,397 worth of income in its first year alone. The PROW and Access Service assisted the delivery of both projects.

Kent County Council has increased its understanding of how best to harness the significant economic benefits of leisure cycling. In 2009 Christchurch College Canterbury was commissioned by KCC look in to the economic benefits of recreational cycling in Kent and specifically to determine how leisure cycling could boost the economy.¹⁰

The research gave a clear insight into demand and identified one very clear message; that routes "*need to be traffic free*" both to attract repeat visits and first-time visitors. The study also showed that traffic free routes were essential in attracting women and less experienced riders, the groups which bring greatest economic value. The promotion of cycling and provision of a

⁹ The survey was carried out in the year of the opening of the Turner Contemporary in Margate and the Golf Open in Sandwich, raising the profile of both the cultural and golf 'offer' of east Kent.

¹⁰ SPEAR (Sport, Physical Activity and Education Research, Canterbury Christchurch University) (April 2011) Report to Kent County Council, A Systematic Review of Evidence for the Local Impacts of Tourism and Leisure Cycling

better connected traffic-free network will continue to be a priority for the PROW and Access Service, taking into consideration the findings of the Christchurch College study.

The rights of way network also supports sustainable and 'active' travel modes, the use of which also brings economic benefit. A report commissioned by Cycling England suggested that returning cycling trips to the levels recorded in 1995 would save approximately £500 million across the country in costs related to ill health, pollution and congestion. Evidence from the first round of "Cycling Development Towns" suggests that for every £1 that is invested in cycling, the saving in relation to decreased mortality alone is £2.59.¹¹ This does not take into account the value of all the other positive health benefits that are associated with regular cycling.

"I just had to write to say WOW! What a fantastic site! (Explore Kent website). Loads and loads of information about fabulous walks of all abilities, lengths and locations. All so beautifully described and mapped and easy to understand."

Otford Oast Womens Institute

Actions to Help the Kent Economy to Grow

- Lead a strategic approach to expand the leisure walking and cycling market in Kent in order to increase economic benefit, including improving understanding of the resource and development needs
- Work with Visit Kent to strongly promote the countryside recreation offer of Kent to key markets both locally and in London and Northern Europe
- Work with transport partners to ensure information is available at key gateways, including the Port of Dover, Manston Airport and International Rail Stations
- Aim to deliver wider environmental benefits through the delivery of improvement schemes using guidance included within the "Good Design Guide"
- Support the development and implementation of the Kent Downs and High Weald AONB plans, the County Councils Environment Strategy and District Transport and Green Infrastructure Policies
- Promote good design principles for new rights of way created as part of development schemes
- Ensure high levels of customer service are maintained through staff training
- Increase understanding by businesses and service providers of how to offer a quality service to walkers, cyclists and others seeking outdoor recreation
- Seize the opportunity to implement improvements to the walking, cycling and horse riding network through major transport infrastructure schemes
- Secure external funding to support Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan objectives that can be invested in Kent's businesses and communities.

¹¹ Sloman L, Cavill N, Cope A, Muller L and Kennedy A (2009) *Analysis and synthesis of evidence on the effects of Investment in Six Cycling Demonstration Towns*, Report for Department for Transport and Cycling England

Tackling Disadvantage

The countryside can be seen as a great outpatient department whose therapeutic value is yet to be fully realised. (Dr William Bird, Natural Fit, RSPB, 2004)

Kent's PROW and Access Service has led the way into research and provision for disabled people.

Walking, cycling and access to green spaces, improves general health, helps to lower blood pressure and improves heart health, helps with weight and stress management as well as improving mental health and wellbeing.

"Kent's PROW and Access Service are doing fantastic work on the promotion of walking that is far further ahead of any other council that I know. Working very closely with East Kent PCT they ran a very successful campaign using local radio to promote walking to hard to reach groups."

Dr William Bird MBE, Strategic Health Advisor for Natural England

"...we are now planning many healthy walks thanks to the (Explore Kent) website allowing us to download the maps....once again thank you for all the efforts of the team it is very much appreciated."

Health Walks Coordinator, NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT



Activities such as walking and cycling are amongst the most accessible forms of health promoting exercise available. The rights of way and greenspace networks provide an immense free resource across the county and, largely, there is no need for special training or equipment.

Seven in ten people do not take enough exercise to benefit their health as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer. Engagement in physical activity reduces the risk of up to 20 chronic diseases and disorders including obesity, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and certain cancers.

There is now a wealth of evidence demonstrating the health benefits of regular exercise in the natural environment. Walking, cycling and access to green spaces, improves general health,

helps to lower blood pressure and improves heart health, helps with weight and stress management as well as improving mental health and wellbeing.

Encouraging people to walk more, whether for health, recreation, or as an alternative to driving often requires support. In order to maximise the benefits of walking, in partnership with the Local Health Authority, the **PROW and Access Service** has organised walking festivals within areas of health inequality to encourage daily walking. Since the festivals started two years ago over 2000 people have taken part.

Since the first Countryside Access Improvement Plan, the **PROW and Access Service** has continued to increase its understanding of the needs of mobility impaired and other disabled people, as well as other groups under-represented amongst countryside users (see also Section 2: Use, Demand and Public Benefit in Under-Represented Groups). The accessibility of rights of way, including removing stiles and other barriers, will continue to be a high priority, and the **Service** will continue to provide 'access for all' routes. Working with local communities will enable resources to be focussed on those routes important to them.



Explore Kent will continue to facilitate guided walks, offering a great way to begin walking, and a service that local health providers can promote.

Attention will be focused on supporting the delivery of the Vision for Kent and Local Transport Plan 3 through reducing barriers, providing information to enable independent living, encouraging walking as part of everyday lives, supporting rural economies and providing safe and direct routes to schools and community facilities.

Actions to Tackle Disadvantage

- Providing promotional material specifically targeted to BME populations will be considered, especially to promote new infrastructure, for example cycle routes and paths
- Officers will proactively seek opportunities to improve the accessibility of the network, following consultation with local landowners and parishes
- Deliver the needs of customers through developing new routes and improvements in areas of demand using data from customer, organisations and local communities
- Increase understanding of the needs of groups which are under-engaged in access to the countryside, and champion this agenda across other service providers
- Improve the standard of PROW furniture through the application of asset management principles, the provision of quality materials and better design.
- Identify and investigate where the Public Rights of Way network can provide safe alternative routes to avoid people having to walk, ride, or cycle on busy roads.

Putting the Citizen in Control

The contents of this plan and corresponding objectives are a direct response to customer suggestions and feedback, putting the customer at the heart of what we do

The Countryside Access Wardens scheme has for many years provided opportunities for people to get involved in the delivery of the **Service**

The **PROW and Access Service** works in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, not least of which are its customers.

The Kent Countryside Access Forum is a statutory but independent forum which advises decision making organisations, including Kent County Council, on the provision of access to rights of way and green spaces in their local area. The group is made up from a range of different people from the local community representing landowners and managers, access users such as walkers, cyclists and horse riders, and other interests such as health and conservation. All of the members are volunteers and together they provide a balanced view about access issues and priorities; both those that affect their local area and those that might influence national policy.



Access Forums are statutory bodies¹² and the relevant organisations are required to have regard to advice given by them, giving the advice provided by the volunteer members significant weight.

The Countryside Access Wardens scheme has for many years provided opportunities for people to get involved in the delivery of the **Service**.

Analysis of the reports and complaints received from the public indicated that some routine tasks, such as waymarking and path clearance, could be safely carried out by volunteers, as well as bringing the added benefits of community involvement, ownership in the **Service** and network and skills advancement. These small-scale works have a high impact on users' enjoyment of the rights of way network.

All volunteers are trained, and wardens who wish to increase their involvement can take responsibility for sections of promoted routes, mentor other wardens or support new recruits, giving opportunities for a range of skills development. The flexibility and attractiveness of the work has resulted in the scheme being very popular.

Local communities will be encouraged to provide volunteers to our Countryside Wardens programme to assist with the maintenance of their local walking routes and report on any larger maintenance issues. Working in partnership with Sustrans, the **Service** will also explore expanding the Countryside Wardens programme to include cycling rangers. It is important to recognise though that the Warden scheme involves significant management responsibilities and resource requirements, which places an effective limit on the number of volunteers that can be supported.

Numerous suggestions for changes to the Public Rights of Way network were received through the research phase of the 2007 Countryside Access Improvement Plan, and these requests continue to be received. This engagement by customers has allowed the **PROW and Access Service** and its partners to select projects which meet the needs of customers and which create a better network for both existing and new users.

Actions to Put the Citizen in Control

- Continue to support the Kent Countryside Access Forum, and seek to ensure that it remains inclusive and effective
- Register requests for network improvements and projects coming from customers and community groups and organisations and prioritise these for action against this plan
- Deliver the needs of customers



¹² In accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

through developing new routes and improvements in areas of demand using data from customer, organisations and local communities

- Target appropriate action in response to customer information to resolve any illegal obstructions or changes to rights of way in line with our statement of priorities and the available resource.
- Work closely with Natural England to establish the English National Coastal Trail and other routes requested by communities through the “Paths for Communities” grants
- Retain community involvement as a key element of service delivery and continue to develop the Countryside Wardens Scheme expanding the roles of individual wardens, linking with Sustrans to include cycling wardens.

“Even through the winter months we’ve loved the motivation of knowing that we are helping to make a difference. We’ve already managed to do a few jobs walking near Faversham, although we are looking forward to the summer!”

**200th Countryside Access Warden
Cheryl Mvula**



Legislative and Policy Context

Introduction

The importance of the countryside, coast, and urban green space is documented in many national and local policies and strategies, and is also afforded strong protection in law. An estimated 4000 individual statutes, regulations and judgements have a direct relevance to its protection, usage and development.

High quality, legally protected, and well-promoted access for recreation, walking, cycling and horse riding is also essential for addressing a number of public policy objectives. Good management of rights of way and other urban, rural and coastal public access supports the tackling of health inequality and disadvantage in our communities, provides low cost sustainable transport and generally makes Kent a great place to live, work and visit.

This plan is shaped by national legislation and policy, including over 4,000 statutes, regulations and judgements and directly delivers Kent's priority policies across a broad spectrum of areas including, health, tourism, transport, regeneration and the environment.

Delivering Kent's Priorities

The importance to the people of Kent and the Kent economy is evident by the attention it receives in many of Kent's strategic policies and strategies. Due to the wide reach of the work of the **PROW and Access Service**, the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan contributes to the delivery of a wide range of Kent policies and strategies. Some of these are Kent County Council policies and strategies; others are those of partner agencies.



Policy/Strategy	Delivery through the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan
<p>Vision for Kent 2012 – 2022 (Kent Partnership, 2011)</p> <p>Vision for Kent is the County's Community Strategy, building on previous versions in 2002 and 2006. The strategy responds to the challenges created by the current period of unprecedented reform and budget reductions, whilst recognising that this can also bring opportunities.</p> <p>Vision for Kent contains three county-wide ambitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To grow the economy - 'for Kent to be open for business with a growing, successful economy and jobs for all.' • To tackle disadvantage – 'for Kent to be a county of opportunity, where aspiration rather than dependency is supported and quality of life is high for everyone'. <p>To put the citizen in control – 'for power and influence to be in the hands of local people so they are able to take responsibility for themselves, their families, and their communities'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the rural visitor economy, making the most of Kent's natural assets and supporting Kent's Small and Medium Sized Enterprises are all key priorities in the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan. • Delivery of works through Kent based small and medium sized enterprises. • Some of the top priorities in tackling disadvantage include improving mental health through prevention campaigns and physical activities including walking and cycling. Better and more accessible walking and cycling infrastructure is a priority to help regenerate deprived areas and improve quality of life. • Promoting volunteering and empowering citizens is central to this strategy. Supporting capacity building activity, supporting the Countryside Access Forum, and expanding the Explore Kent Partnership will all deliver priority outcomes against this Ambition.
<p>Bold Steps for Kent (Kent County Council, 2010)</p> <p>Bold Steps for Kent is KCC's Medium Term Plan to 2014/15, setting out how KCC needs to change how it works to adapt to the changing shape of public services, underpinned by the clear message that residents should have more influence on how services are provided locally.</p> <p>Running throughout Bold Steps for Kent are the three ambitions of 'Vision for Kent';</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help the Kent economy to grow • To put the citizen in control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To tackle disadvantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Statement of Action of this plan will clearly demonstrate how Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan supports Bold Steps for Kent and Vision for Kent. • The development and promotion of recreational routes that support business and the rural economy. • Working with communities to ensure residents have access to key destinations and services without the reliance of vehicles.

Policy/Strategy	Delivery through the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan
<p>•</p> <p>Local Transport Plan 2011-2016 (Kent County Council, 2011)</p> <p>Kent's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) sets out Kent County Council's Strategy and Implementation Plans for local transport investment for the period 2011-16.</p> <p>The Department for Transport recommends that authorities integrate their Rights of Way Improvement Plans with their LTP.¹³</p> <p>The Plan explains why transport is important to Kent, the current transport related problems and how the authority will prioritise measures under five Themes based on the Government's five National Transport Goals, adapted for Kent:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Growth Without Gridlock 2. A Safer and Healthier County 3. Supporting Independence 4. Tackling a Changing Climate 5. Enjoying Life in Kent <p>Each of the five Themes focusses on the areas where the challenges are most acute. In the prioritisation of, cycling and walking consistently score highly against the value for money assessment.</p>	<p>•</p> <p>The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan and the LTP3 are closely integrated documents. In particular, the Improvement Plan supports all five of the LTP3 Themes and Objectives.</p> <p>Supporting and developing schemes identified in LTP3 and local authority priorities that provide pedestrian and cycling routes for access to jobs and services</p> <p>Working with local schools, communities and developers to deliver safe, traffic-free routes, including the development of "behind the hedge" paths that provide safe walking/cycling routes adjacent to country lanes to safely connect communities and services</p> <p>Promoting the benefits of Active Transport through the Explore Kent brand including the promotion of "Access for All" routes and guided walks</p> <p>Supporting independence for all through the removal of unnecessary barriers and targeted improvements to path surfacing and drainage.</p> <p>Developing the Public Rights of Way network to encourage modal shift to walking and cycling</p> <p>Objectives in the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan are key components of delivering LTP objectives for;</p> <p>Enjoying the Journey</p> <p>Access to Green Spaces and Countryside</p> <p>Protecting Kent's Natural and Man-Made Environment</p> <p>Providing transport information, specifically in developing Kent's Town's Walking and Cycling maps</p> <p>Developing the first phase of the English Coastal Trail through Kent.</p>

¹³ DfT (2009), Guidance on Local Transport Plans

Policy/Strategy	Delivery through the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan
<p>Kent County Council Equality Strategy (Kent County Council, 2010)</p> <p>This strategy sets objectives for responsive and accessible services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide services which are accessible to all people within the community, based on their needs and choices • To provide clear, meaningful information about council services in ways that are accessible to all and meet diverse needs • To work with partners in consulting and communicating with all sections of the community including in formats suitable for those with sensory impairments on service needs and provision • To monitor take-up and evaluate services including using trends from the Complaints Procedure, to ensure they do not discriminate or exclude. • We aim to measure our achievement in providing responsive and accessible services by reaching and maintaining 'Excellent' status, the highest level of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan considers and specifically addresses the needs of a wide range of people and including under-represented groups. • The PROW and Access Service will champion greater inclusion by these groups and will disseminate best practice across Kent. • The PROW and Access Service will continue to increase the accessibility of the network, for example through removing stiles and improving surfacing.
<p>Unlocking Kent's Cultural Potential - A Cultural Strategy for Kent 2010 – 2015 (Kent Partnership, 2010)</p> <p>The Cultural Strategy for Kent 2010-2015 promotes a shared understanding of how the county's cultural offer can enhance the lives of Kent's residents and how it can be used to strengthen the individual, collective and economic wellbeing of the county.</p> <p>The strategy has three 'Intentions'. Intention 2 states 'We will protect Kent's existing strengths by being passionate and responsible stewards of Kent's built and natural environment'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan will support the emphasis of the Cultural Strategy to encourage people to enjoy their built and natural environment and encourage wider use of the countryside.
<p>Growing the Garden of England: A Strategy for Environment and Economy in Kent (Kent County Council, 2011)</p> <p>The three-year Kent Environment Strategy has three themes and ten priorities representing the major challenges and opportunities for Kent over the next 10 to 20 years. It is one of eight corporate strategies setting out the Vision for Kent's objective 'to be a better place for people to live, work and visit'.</p> <p>One of the three targets under the third theme, 'Valuing our natural, historic and living environment', is to</p>	<p>Action VE 10.1 states: Deliver the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan, with an on-going commitment to customer led improvements to Kent's green infrastructure, with the target to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the condition, use, and value of Kent's Public Rights of Way and open space. <p>Action VE 10.2 states: Deliver initiatives in the Kent area that enable people to more readily access green space and the historic environment such as Explore Kent, outdoor learning, and volunteering, with the target of:</p>

Policy/Strategy	Delivery through the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan
<p>'Improve Kent residents' access to their natural environment by delivering all seven objectives of the Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan'.</p> <p>Unlocking Kent's Potential Kent County Council (2009)</p> <p>Unlocking Kent's Potential, Kent County Council's Regeneration Framework aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be forward looking, looking to the future challenges and opportunities facing Kent in global and domestic contexts • Set out the key questions and choices that flow from these challenges • Be a statement of Kent County Council's commitment to tackle the big issues facing our county • Scope the essential infrastructure needs for the public capital investment for the next 20-25 years <p>It identifies five key challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a new relationship with business • Unlocking talent to support the Kent economy • Embracing a growing and changing population • Building homes and communities, not estates • Delivering growth without transport gridlock <p>It identifies two cross-cutting themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the climate challenge • Recognising Kent's diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further development of Explore Kent Partnership • The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan directly delivers against priority 4, 'Building homes and communities, not estates', through providing essential elements which improve the quality of life of Kent's residents, including access to greenspace and recreation. • The Improvement Plan has also set out how the changing population of Kent will be provided with the service it needs, thereby addressing priority 3, 'Embracing a growing and changing population'. • It also delivers against priority 5, 'Delivering growth without transport gridlock', through the provision of walking and cycling routes. • The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan also assists in meeting the two cross-cutting themes of 'meeting the climate challenge' through supporting sustainable travel modes, and 'Recognising Kent's diversity', through working to expand services to all members of Kent's population.
<p>Growth Without Gridlock (Kent County Council, 2010)</p> <p>This strategy sets out the transport improvements required if Kent is to accommodate the growth expected across the county and is to have sufficient capacity and resilience to provide for efficient and reliable journeys. It states that the county's highway network is already overloaded at critical points and that transport has a key role to play in enabling a transformation of the fortunes of communities in the County.</p> <p>Improving the cycling and walking networks in the Growth Points and Growth Areas and all major urban settlements is a theme throughout the document, and is contained within the ten significant priority actions of the plan.</p>	<p>This Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan will deliver against the priorities of Growth without Gridlock, through supporting walking and cycling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further improving traffic management in our towns to reduce congestion and improve air quality • Delivering district authority planning priorities and proposals, all of which include improving cycling and walking networks

Policy/Strategy	Delivery through the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan
<p>Kent and Medway Tourism Development Framework 2009 (Kent County Council, 2009)</p> <p>Over £1.5bn of Kent's £3.2bn annual tourism income is directly attributed to visitors exploring the countryside and coast. A safe, well-maintained, and well promoted Public Rights of Way network is essential to support the tourism industry.</p> <p>The 10-year Kent and Medway Development Framework sets out ten tasks to support and develop the tourism industry. This Framework states that 'Kent and Medway enjoy an extensive Public Rights of Way network and a number of walking and cycling routes have been established and are well promoted via Explore Kent. The network is undoubtedly a major asset and offers further potential for on-going promotion and development'.¹⁴</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tourism Framework's Action Plan states the need to 'Work with Explore Kent on the development of circular routes, connecting key visitor destinations, signage and the development of partnerships between key stakeholders to develop and inform visitor packages'.
<p>Kent Rural Delivery Framework (Kent Rural Board, 2007)</p> <p>The first dedicated multi-agency action plan for Kent's rural areas seeks, through partnership working, to address the key issues affecting our rural businesses, communities and environment. The Framework recognises the importance of Public Rights of Way and access to public green space to Kent's rural communities and the rural economy.</p>	<p><u>Action Plan 1 - Supporting Rural Enterprise</u> 4b) Create more added value tourism products eg themed /guided walks (based on existing Public Rights of Way). Facilitate more community tourism initiatives linked in mainstream tourism marketing activities in Kent 5b) Support the further development of walking, cycling and equestrian tourism products</p> <p><u>Action Plan 2 - Fostering Vibrant Rural Communities</u> 1d) Maximise opportunities provided by Kent's open spaces and public right of way network for exercise to develop health and safe communities. 3d) Develop the rural Public Rights of Way network to improve rural accessibility by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving information on access to Kent's Public Rights of Way network • Improving the connectivity of the rights of way network to other access provision in rural areas • Improving the rights of way network to encourage a modal change from private car to walking and cycling for short journeys in rural areas e.g. schools, employment & village shop trips • Increasing opportunities for cyclists and equestrians to use traffic free routes e.g. Greenways <p><u>Action Plan 3 - Valuing the Rural Environment</u> 1a) Develop promotional campaigns, leaflets to enhance consumer understanding of the links between locally produced products and landscape conservation e.g. food themed-walking trails 4a) Explore ways of increasing rural leisure &</p>

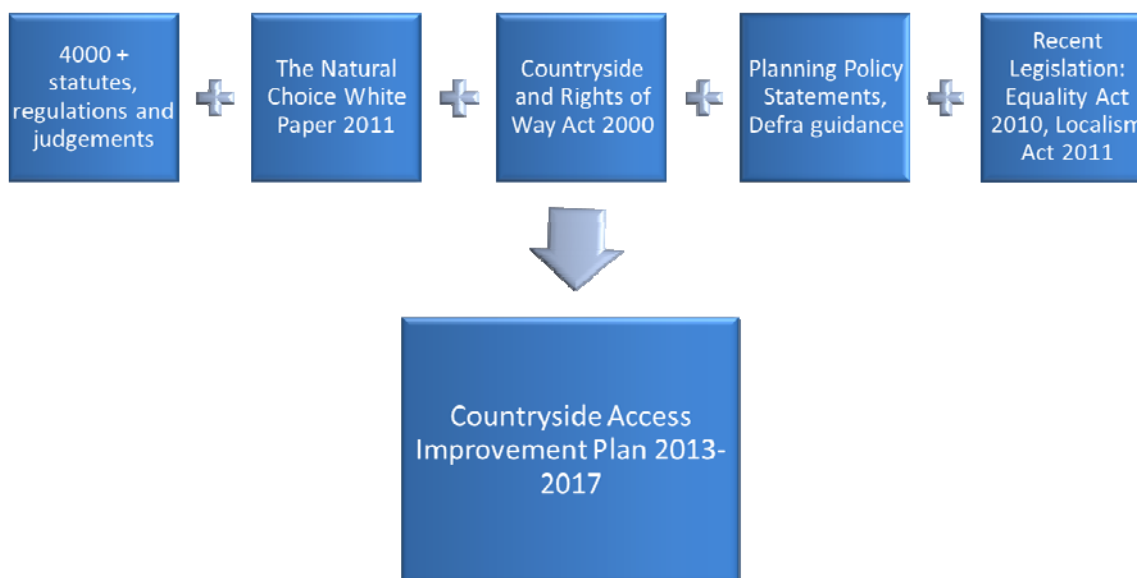
¹⁴ paragraph 2.2.5

Policy/Strategy	Delivery through the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan
<p>Kent Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014 (Kent Children's Trust, 2011)</p> <p>The Kent Children's Trust was established in September 2006 to ensure joined-up approaches centred around the child/young person's needs. Kent is home to 330,795 children and young people aged 0-18, nearly 25% of the population, and 18% will be obese on leaving primary school.</p> <p>A 'Healthy Start in Life' is one of seven areas of need identified, to be addressed through promoting healthy lifestyles to address health inequalities.</p>	<p>recreation opportunities including promotion of Kent countryside as an 'outdoor gym'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Explore Kent' will directly support the 'Healthy Start in Life' area of need, through the promotion of exercise and active recreation. • Routes linking to schools and childcare centres will be prioritised for improvement and maintenance
<p>Live Life to the Full – A Public Health Strategy for Kent (East and Coastal Kent PCT, West Kent PCT, Kent County Council 2007/8)</p> <p>This strategy brings together the public health plans and activities of Primary Care Trusts and Local Authorities and is a joint commitment from them to the public, to improve the health of Kent residents. The strategy has six priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing health inequalities significantly • Improving children's mental health and wellbeing • Improving sexual health and reducing teenage pregnancies • More adults living healthier lives and preventing more disease • Enabling more older people to live at home with chronic disease • Reducing substance misuse and excessive alcohol drinking 	<p>Work through the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan will in particular contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More adults living healthier lives and preventing more disease. • Healthy exercise – tackling obesity, increases in physical activity, promoting walking and cycling to work
<p>Development and Strategic Planning and Local Development Frameworks</p> <p>A Local Development Framework (LDF) is a spatial planning strategy introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It replaces the previous system of county level Structure Plans and district level Local Plans.</p> <p>At the end of 2012, 6 district councils in Kent had adopted Core Strategies (Ashford, Dartford, Dover, and Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells). The Core Strategy is part of the suite of documents which make up the LDF. All make reference to the importance of Public Rights of Way and access to green space in their respective administrative areas. Further specifics can be found in the LTP3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan will support a range of planning policies, for example to increase sustainable travel, access to the countryside and to deliver green infrastructure. • Objectives ensure that the PROW and Access Service are involved in the development of strategies affecting Public Rights of Way and Green infrastructure

Policy/Strategy	Delivery through the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan
<p>Green Infrastructure Plans</p> <p>Some district councils have formulated strategies to ensure that there is adequate Green Infrastructure (GI) provision within their administrative areas. Some, although not all, of these plans also form part of the LDF suite of documents.</p> <p>Green Infrastructure is a strategically planned and delivered network of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green Infrastructure includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and private gardens.</p> <p>The rights of way network is a fundamental and important component of the green infrastructure network, with common land and 'access land' also both valuable green space resource.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rights of way network forms a fundamental component of the GI network and improvement and expansion of the network as set out in the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan would significantly support the aims of green infrastructure strategies. • The PROW and Access Service will continue to work with district authorities to raise recognition of the contribution that the rights of way network can make in delivery of green infrastructure.
<p>Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan</p> <p>The management plan sets in place clear policies and actions for the conservation, management and enhancement of the AONB from 2009-2014 taking in to consideration a longer term view. The AONB covers an area of 878 sq. km from Dover to the Surrey Border.</p>	<p>The following actions contained within the Management Plan will be delivered through joint working with the AONB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rights of way network forms a fundamental component
<p>Kent High Weald AONB Management Plan</p> <p>The High Weald covers an area of 1457 sq. km and covers the Wealden areas of four counties, Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey. The area has been designated to protect its historic landscape of rolling hills, small irregular fields, abundant woods and hedges, scattered farmsteads and sunken lanes. Produced in 2004 and reviewed in 2008 the plan sets put a 20 year strategy for protecting the AONB.</p>	<p>The following actions contained within the Management Plan will be delivered through joint working with the AONB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UE1 Objective: To increase opportunities for learning about and celebrating the character of the High Weald • UE2 Objective: To increase the contribution of individuals to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB • UE4 Objective: Integrated management of the resources for informal open-air recreation to facilitate 'green' use by residents and visitors

Policy/Strategy	Delivery through the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan
<p>District Cycling Strategies</p> <p>Cycling Strategies have been produced to cover many of Kent's District Council areas. Some have been produced by Kent County Council in partnership with District Councils have produced cycling strategies to increase cycling infrastructure provision and cycling uptake within their local authority areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan adds to the evidence base for increase cycling infrastructure provision and uptake. • Delivery of new cycling route through this plan will directly support the aims and delivery of District level cycling strategies.

Responding to National Legislation and Policy



The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan is framed by national policy, law and regulations. The volume of these is huge; detailed here are some of the key statutes and national policy, including some recent legislation, which has informed this edition of the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act), Kent County Council was required to prepare its first Rights of Way Improvement Plan by November 2007. This new duty, placed on all highway authorities, aimed to transform traditional reactive frontline services into visionary, forward-thinking, and proactive ones. The Act placed a duty on KCC to consult and listen to the public and then through a Statement of Action plan to implement improvements. Kent's first plan, the Kent Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2007-17, was adopted by Cabinet in February 2008.

The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2013-17 is a revision of the first plan. In preparing this new plan KCC is again required to undertake the following assessments:¹⁵

- a) the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public,
- b) the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the authority's area,
- c) the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems,
- d) such other matters relating to local rights of way as the Secretary of State may direct.

¹⁵ Under CRoW Act section 60(2)

Before preparing or reviewing a plan, and in particular in making any assessment under section 60, KCC is required to consult widely, including each adjoining local highway authority, all district councils and each parish or community council, the Kent Local Access Forum, and of course the wider public.

The Equality Act 2010

Under the Equality Act, the three existing separate duties have been replaced with a single more effective framework. This single Public Sector Equality Duty requires Public Authorities in the exercise of their functions to have due regard to the need to:

(A) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct which is prohibited by or under the Act;

(B) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(C) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The new statutory duty covers race, disability and gender, as previously, but now also includes age,¹⁶ sexual orientation, gender identity and religion or belief.

The Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act gained Royal Assent in November 2011, with a series of detailed secondary regulations still to be enacted. The Act is extremely wide ranging, covering public service reform, community rights, increasing democracy and participation, housing and planning reforms and new freedoms and flexibilities for local government. It reflects Government's ambitions to decentralise power away from Whitehall and back into the hands of local councils, communities and individuals to act on local priorities.

The Act confers new rights and powers for local communities and:

- makes it easier for local people to take over the amenities they love and keep them part of local life
- ensures that local social enterprises, volunteers and community groups with a bright idea for improving local services get a chance to change how things are done
- enables local residents to call local authorities to account for the careful management of taxpayers' money

The Act also makes reforms to the planning system making it clearer, more democratic and more effective. The Act:

- places significantly more influence in the hands of local people over issues that make a big difference to their lives
- provides appropriate support and recognition to communities who welcome new development
- reduces red tape, making it easier for authorities to get on with the job of working with local people to draw up a vision for their area's future

¹⁶ only in respect of people over eighteens

- reinforces the democratic nature of the planning system - passing power from bodies not directly answerable to the public, to democratically accountable ministers

Environment Agency: Creating a Better Place 2010-15: Our Corporate Strategy (Environment Agency 2010)

The Environment Agency has a statutory duty to promote the use of inland and coastal water and associated land for sport and recreation. This strategy sets out how the Agency, working with others, will bring pace and ingenuity to the challenge of a changing environment. The strategy includes five key themes, one of which is 'working with people and communities to create better places' which is supported by a strategy on angling, navigation and recreation. This supporting strategy has two aims, one of which is for 'More people, from all backgrounds, to enjoy and benefit more from improved local environments through angling, navigation, sport and other recreation.' The Environment Agency must have regard to advice it receives from the Kent Countryside Access Forum in implementing its recreation strategy in Kent.

Healthy Lives, Health People: Improving outcomes and supporting transparency

Part 1: A Public Health Outcomes Framework for England, 2013-2016

The Public Health Outcomes Framework is policy update on the reformed public health system following the earlier *Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Update and Way Forward*. The system will be refocused around achieving positive health outcomes and reducing health inequalities.

The Framework focuses on two high-level outcomes; increased healthy life expectancy and reduced differences in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between communities.

Public health indicators have been allocated into four 'domains'. The work of the **PROW and Access Service** strongly delivers against:

Domain 1 (Improving the wider determinants of health (Indicator 1.16 Utilisation of green space for exercise / health reasons)

Inclusion of this indicator is recognition of the significance of accessible green space as a wider determinant of public health, and the strong evidence suggesting that green spaces have a beneficial impact on physical and mental wellbeing.

Domain 2 – Health improvement

(Indicator 2.13 (2.13i and 2.13ii) Proportion of physically active and inactive adults)

Lack of physical activity costs the NHS over £1bn per year – £6.5bn per year to the wider economy – and is one of the top risk factors for premature mortality. Physical activity provides important health benefits and participation during youth and early adulthood can lay the foundation for lifelong participation in physical activity.

Emerging National Policy

The Natural Choice White Paper: Securing the Value of Nature (2011)

This White Paper, the first on the natural environment for over 20 years, places the value of nature at the centre of the choices our nation must make to enhance our environment and support economic growth and personal wellbeing. It aims to strengthen connections between

people and nature, to the benefit of both. Setting a vision to 2060, it is the most recent clear signal from Government about the value of nature and public access to it.

The White Paper sets out four key reforms necessary for ‘reconnecting people with nature’:

- 1) Improving Public Health Locally: making high-quality green space available to everyone;
- 2) Action to get more Children Learning Outdoors: removing barriers and increasing schools’ abilities to teach outdoors;
- 3) New Green Areas Designation: empowering communities to protect local environments that are important to them;
- 4) Help for Everyone to ‘do the right thing’: at home, when shopping or as volunteers.

The Government proposes to address the challenge of reconnecting people with nature in six ways. The following ideas and aspirations taken from the White Paper will be specifically addressed, or will be supported by this Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan.

‘Connecting through nature’s health service’: There are clear benefits to public health and the economy of reconnecting people with nature. A good quality environment is associated with better mental health, reduced stress and increased physical activity.

‘Connecting through better neighbourhood access to nature’: Not everyone can enjoy green spaces near where they live. Minority ethnic communities, elderly people and those with disabilities also often have less access to green spaces, and this contributes to health and other inequalities. The Government wants to improve access to nature in local neighbourhoods, giving more people the opportunity to gain benefits from connecting with it. The new Green Areas Designation will give people an opportunity to protect local community green spaces and local authorities and civil society organisations need to consider new approaches for accessing, maintaining and managing green spaces. Green spaces should also be identified in neighbourhood and local plans.

‘Connecting by improving access to the countryside’: The White Paper states that clear, well-maintained paths and bridleways are important to give people access to the natural environment, as well as having a significant positive impact on the local economy. The Government aims to make it easier for local communities and civil society groups to get involved, and will consult on simplifying and streamlining the processes for recording and making changes to Public Rights of Way. This will make it easier to claim Public Rights of Way and to make changes to them in order to create a network that meets the needs of local people.

‘Connecting by ‘paying back’ to nature in our most visited landscapes’: Tourism is the fifth largest industry in the UK and supports 2.2 million jobs in England, contributing nearly £97 billion to the economy, with this money helping to support many coastal resorts and rural communities. Tourism must develop in a way that is responsible to the environment, respecting the needs of local people. Tourism businesses directly benefit from these natural assets and may be willing to pay to help protect them, for example through voluntary payback schemes. Through this mechanism, visitors or local business which benefit from tourism activity ‘pay back’ to the area through donations which, in turn, support work to enhance the local natural environment.

‘Connecting through voluntary action – good for us and good for nature’: The White Paper states that volunteering is one of the most fulfilling ways to experience the natural world, helping people develop skills, solve local problems and develop a sense of local ownership.

There are high levels of interest in volunteering, and to boost volunteering further, the Government intends to launch a new phase of the Muck In 4Life campaign, so that more people experience the benefits of spending time in the natural environment.

"This experience has given me the confidence to join other groups... I will definitely be recommending this to all my friends".

Debra Andrews, Kent resident

Kent's Access Resource



Kent residents have a fantastically rich resource to choose from to access and enjoy the Kent countryside and coast, in both urban and rural areas. Public Rights of Way criss-cross every corner of the county and 20% of these routes are promoted to make them as accessible as possible. Added to this are the many publicly accessible green spaces, country parks, coast, common land and open access land, creating a vast network for people use and enjoy.

Public Rights of Way

Kent's PROW and Access Service manages the longest Public Rights of Way network in the country, the distance between Maidstone and Deli.

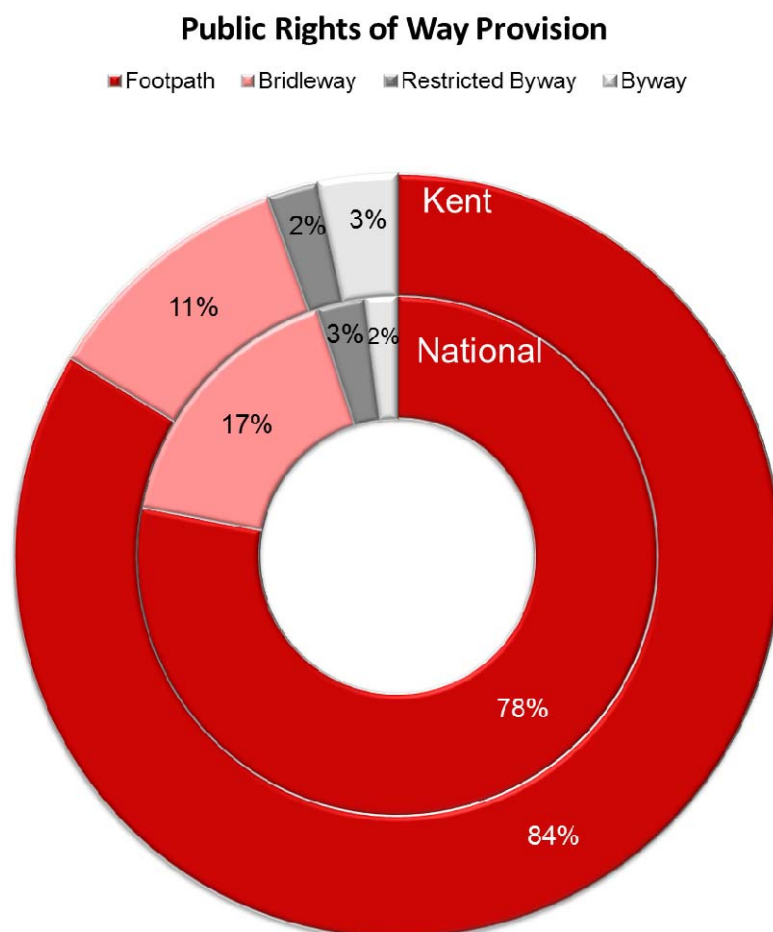
England and Wales have a unique network of publicly-accessible paths and tracks, which are legally protected public highways.

Kent County Council manages a larger rights of way network than any other local authority. This network constitutes a significant amount (44.5%) of available public highway, above the national average (39%). Kent has 5276 miles (8491 kilometres)¹⁷ of public roads and 4,279 miles (6,887 kilometres) of Public Rights of Way. This total has increased since the 2007

¹⁷ Department for Transport 2011

Countryside Access Improvement Plan due to the addition of 'Excluded Areas'¹⁸ and improved mapping.

When compared to national averages, Kent's rights of way network has a higher percentage of footpaths and, consequently, has a lower than average percentage of the network available to cyclists and horse riders. Whilst a number of "higher status" paths have been created through the work of the [Service](#) since 2007, there remains a significant difference.



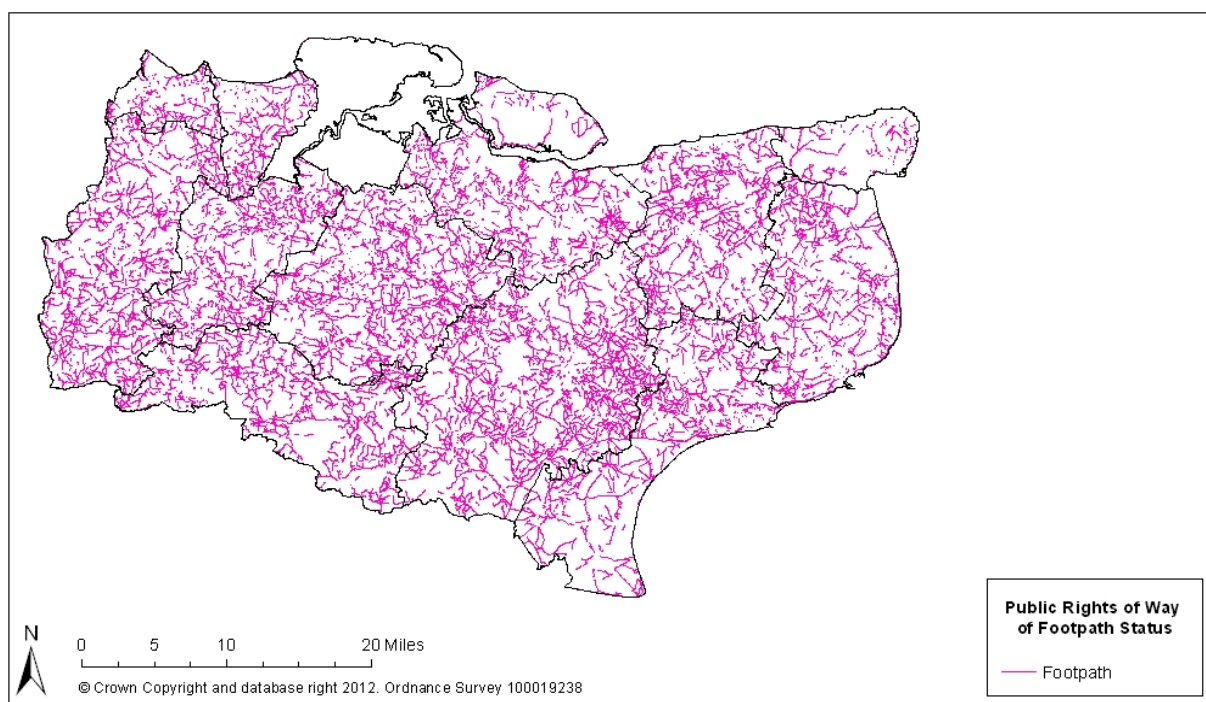
Footpath	3581 Miles	5764 km
Bridleway	463 Miles	745 km
Restricted Byway	92 Miles	147km
Byway	143 Miles	231km

¹⁸ The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 required surveying authorities to produce maps and statements of their areas showing Public Rights of Way. Section 35(4) of the 1949 Act allowed the surveying authority to exclude any part of its area which appeared to be so fully developed that it would be inexpedient to include it. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 removed the surveying authority's option to avoid mapping these 'Excluded Areas'.

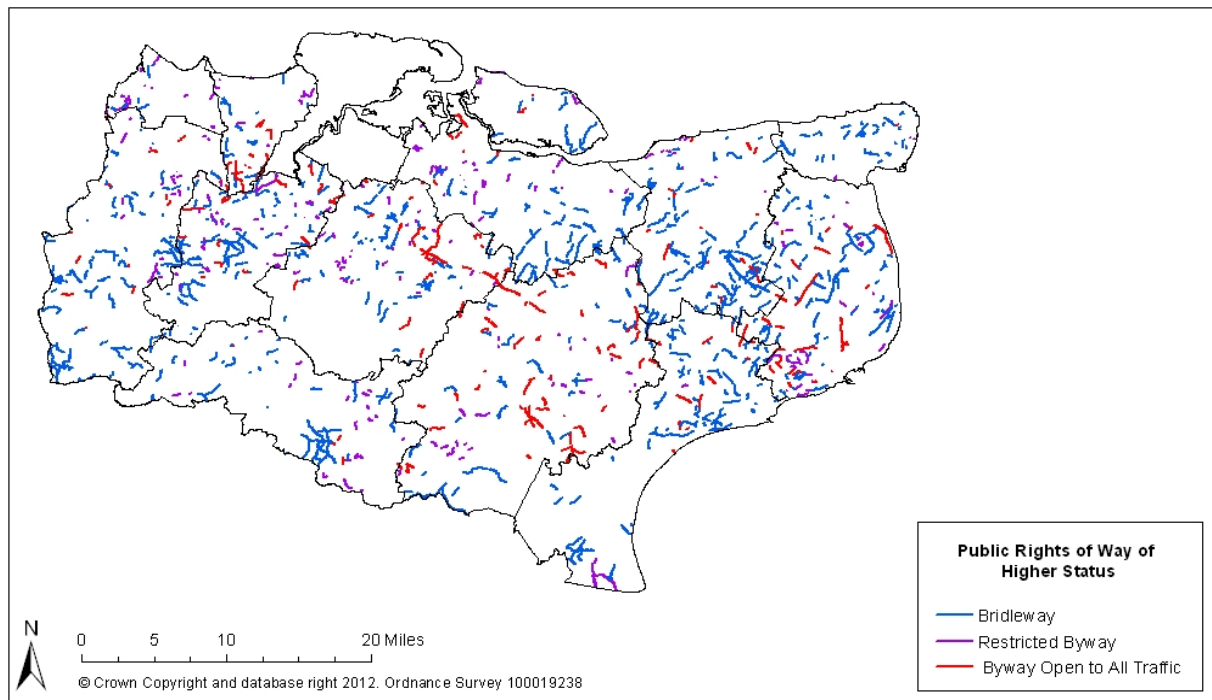
This resource is not spread evenly across the county, with Kent's residents better served in some areas than others. The following plans give a high level demonstration of the inequality of PROW provision. They also clearly show those areas which would generally benefit from new routes, being, Thanet, Sheppey and Dartford and Gravesham. As these locations are also "Growth Areas" set for development, clearly projects in these areas need to be prioritised.

The "Higher Status" plans also show areas where provision is sparse and would benefit from the development of new routes. These areas are; The Romney Marsh, South Maidstone/Tunbridge Wells, Thanet, "The Blean" and Dartford and Gravesham.

Plan of footpath network

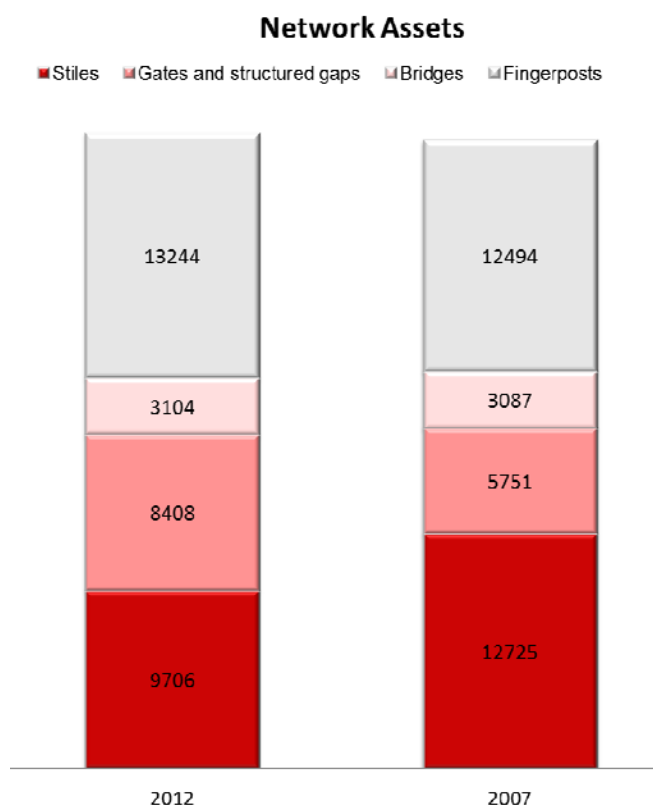


Plan of “Higher Status” network



Asset Statistics

The following chart demonstrates the volume of furniture assets on the network and the difference between 2012 and the start of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan in 2007. Specific targets were set to replace end of life or absent bridges, reduce stiles and improve waymarking. A more detailed analysis of the asset value and its management is included in Appendix 1.



Since the Countryside Access Improvement Plan of 2007, 3019 stiles have been removed from the network. These have been replaced by gaps or gates, greatly increasing the accessibility.

The Public Rights of Way network is supplemented by 'permissive' paths. These are not Public Rights of Way, but are offered by landowners to enable the public to cross their land, and can help join up the rights of way network.

Promoted Routes

The County Council actively publicises many 'promoted routes', all of which are available on the 'Explore Kent' website. These cater for types of walkers, including long distance routes and shorter circular walks, as well as cyclists and riders. These routes, currently standing at a total length of 1351 miles in Kent County Council area (2175 kilometres) showcase the beautiful scenery and diverse landscapes, and are attractive to both residents and visitors to the county. The routes are maintained to a high standard to keep them as easy to use as possible.

There are currently twelve County Council promoted long-distance promoted walking routes in Kent, including the North Downs Way National Trail, Kent's premier walking route. There are also over 40 short promoted routes around Kent, for which there is strong demand. The 'Walks in Kent' leaflet series, for example, consistently receives over 2500 downloads a month.

There are also many routes promoted by other organisations. Due to the high volume these “other” promoted routes the County Council is not resourced to deliver the same standard of maintenance on them. Should an organisation choose to promote a route there is an expectation that they should maintain any signs and keep routes in good condition.

Accessible Green Space

An analysis in 2007 estimated there to be over 18,357 hectares of accessible natural green space in Kent.¹⁹ Kent County Council itself owns and manages thirteen country parks, five of which have visitor centres and receive over 1 million visits each year.

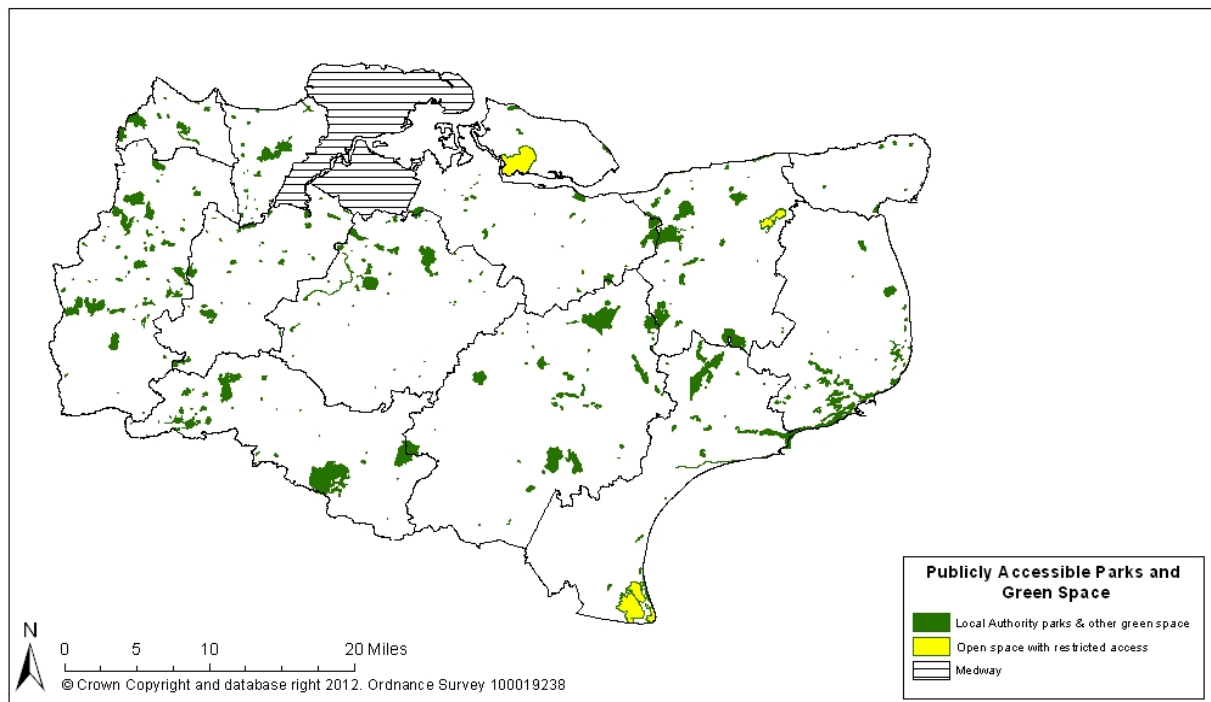


In addition to Kent County Council's areas of responsibility, other organisations and landowners control significant amounts of publicly-accessible green space. These include the RSPB, English Heritage, the National Trust, the Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, Southern Water, District Council's and the Kent Wildlife Trust. Working in partnership is therefore particularly important for the future development of open green space provision in Kent. Many of these have walking routes, and several allow cycling and riding.

The following plan is a general demonstration of provision of publically accessible open space. There are also however a number of other privately owned estates for which an entry fee is required for access. Beeches, promenade and coastal margins are also not shown on the plan. Thanet and Shepway districts both have excellent beeches and this should be considered when referring to the map below.

¹⁹ An Analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in the South East. South East AONBs woodlands programme/Forestry Commission/Natural England (Feb 2007).

Plan showing publically accessible green space



Open Access

Only 0.6% (2,075 hectares) of land has been designated Open Access in Kent

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 dedicated many areas of “Open Access” land across England and Wales, giving new public access rights to land defined as mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land.²⁰ The right to access is limited to walkers, but also allows a number of ‘advised activities’, such as orienteering, climbing and running. Rights do not extend to horse riding, cycling or 4 x 4 use, except where they already exist under other legislation or where the landowner lifts restrictions.



²⁰ Information about access land in England is available from Natural England at www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk and is clearly marked on new Ordnance Survey Explorer maps.

How open access has been improved since the launch of the CAIP

- Kent County Council volunteered to be a pilot authority in the creation of Coastal Access. Working with Natural England. A report on the alignment of Phase 1 of a new National Trail along Kent's coastline between Folkestone and Ramsgate was released for public consultation in August 2012.

Village Greens and Commons

There are 200 registered village greens in Kent, totalling an area of approximately 304 hectares.

There are also 109 parcels of registered common land, totalling approximately 785 hectares.

Village greens and common land are part of the historic fabric of rural life. These essential components of village life provide for a variety of outdoor activities. On average, the County Council receives around 10 applications to register land as a new village green each year, which is significantly higher than the national average. Since 2008, the County Council has also been one of a small number of authorities involved in DEFRA's pilot implementation of new legislation contained in the Commons Act 2006.

Actions to promote and enhance Accessible Green Space

- Secure the protection and enhancement of the access estate through commenting on and influencing, emerging planning policy documents that may impact on access to green space and the Public Rights of Way network
- Maintain and update the county's Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way and Commons Register
- Effectively manage access land and open green space
- Provide information, support and advise providers to increase awareness and availability of Accessible Green Space.

Part 2: Evaluation of Use, Demand and Public Benefit

The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act 2000) requires this plan to assess the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise, enjoyment and open-air recreation, and the extent to which they meet the present and likely future needs of the public.

Part 2 of this plan details this assessment, and is split into two sections. The first section evaluates the opportunities provided for the main types of countryside recreational activity, fulfilling s60 (2) parts a) and b) of the CROW Act 2000. The second section evaluates accessibility for blind and partially sighted persons and those with mobility problems, therefore fulfilling s60 (2) parts part a) and c) of the Act. In addition, this section considers Kent's black and minority ethnic population and younger residents, both of which are under-represented as users of the countryside.²¹

²¹Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) 2011-12

Section 1: Use, Demand and Public Benefit of Countryside Recreation

Introduction

Kent receives more countryside visits than any other county in the South East, and is one of the most visited counties in England
From Natural England Monitor of Engagement in the Natural Environment research 2010

The countryside is a resource enjoyed by large sections of the population. Natural England reports that 98% of people had made at least one leisure visit a year to the outdoors and of this just under half had visited the countryside or coast.²² The countryside and coast are two of the main reasons visitors choose to come to Kent,²³ and visitors to the Kent Downs AONB²⁴ and High Weald AONB chose to come so that they could walk in the countryside.²⁵

Demand remains strong, with participation increasing. Natural England has estimated an increase in countryside visits of around 7% since 2005. The largest increases were in walking (28% increase) and mountain biking and cycling (63% increase), whereas other leisure activities, such as sightseeing and visiting attractions, decreased.²⁶

The same research also demonstrated a high level of demand for countryside visits in Kent in particular. Between 2009 and 2011, residents of Kent took among the highest number of countryside visits of any county in England.²⁷ The volume of these visits is the highest of any of the counties in the South East.

Strong levels of demand are also the experience of the **PROW and Access Service**. New facilities, created to meet the needs of customers, have consistently received high levels of use.

Along the Royal Military Canal at West Hythe, for example, the footpath was upgraded so that cyclists and horse riders could also use the path, along with the provision of rest areas, information boards and a 'traffic-free' link to the new route. Since these improvements, over 61,000 visits have been recorded on the new route in a 13 month period. The Tonbridge to Penshurst Cycle Route, a well-established popular family route, has recorded 229,930 visits between March 2008 and January 2012, with a year on year increase in popularity.

This is also demonstrated in demand for information on walking and cycling in Kent. The Explore Kent website has experienced significantly increased demand between 2010 and 2012, with increases in page views for many activities. Views of walking pages, already a strong market, increased by 39% and cycling by 147 %. The above figures indicate a strong

²² Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) 2009-11

²³ Visit Kent, 47% of visit state that the countryside is a key motivator for their visit

²⁴ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

²⁵ South East Protected Landscape Visitor Baseline Research (2009)

²⁶ Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) MENE/ELVS comparison

²⁷ Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) 2010-2011

level of latent demand. It is therefore important that we build or promote routes that people say are important. The figures both nationally and locally would indicate that the strongest demand is for family friendly, traffic free cycling.

Walking



Walking is the most popular outdoor recreation activity in the country

Visitors to the protected landscapes of the South East, which includes the Kent Downs AONB¹ and High Weald AONB, recorded that walking was not only the most popular activity, it was the main reason for the visit

The borough of Tonbridge and Malling ranks the fifth highest in the country for adult participation in walking.

The Benefits of Walking

Walking:

- Helps to reduce traffic congestion
- Is the only true 'carbon neutral' form of transport
- Improves well-being, physical and mental health
- Promotes an independent lifestyle
- Supports rural economies
- Gives experience and understanding of the natural environment

Walking is the most popular outdoor recreation activity in the country. In 2009/2010, 739 million walks took place in the English countryside, and recent survey completed by Natural England²⁸ showed an increase of 28% in walking between 2005 and 2010, with 45% of people having walked in the last year.²⁹

According to Tourism South East, an estimated 143 million leisure walking trips are made annually in South East England.³⁰ Surveys of visitors to the protected landscapes of the South East, which includes the Kent Downs AONB³¹ and High Weald AONB, recorded that walking was not only the most popular activity, it was the main reason for the visit.³²

Of the pages on the Explore Kent website the walking pages are also the most popular, with around 357,000 visits between May 2011 and May 2012.

According to the recent Department for Transport "Active People"³³ survey the borough of Tonbridge and Malling ranks the fifth highest in the country for adult participation in walking. In Kent, Tunbridge Wells registered as a close second. Levels of participation from Gravesham were one of the lowest recorded in the Country.

Walkers have many areas where they can walk and, of all recreation activities, walking is the best served. Walkers have access to more public paths than any other user type, and can freely use the entire 4,200 mile Public Rights of Way network.

Kent has a wide choice of places for walkers to visit. There are many waterside routes, including most of the main rivers, including; the Medway, Thames, Darent and Stour. The single largest expanse of woodland in Kent, Blean Woods near Canterbury, allows walking, including a series of circular walks promoted on Explore Kent and developed in conjunction with the management partnership. Many of the 156 parks and reserves listed on the Explore Kent database, managed by numerous organisations, include walking trails, and can also be

²⁸ Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) 2010-2011

²⁹ Walking without a dog

³⁰ Tourism South East (2006), The Volume and Value of Walking and Cycling in the South East

³¹ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

³² South East Protected Landscape Visitor Baseline Research (2009)

³³ Local area walking and cycling statistics, Sport England/DfT 2010-2011

gateways to the wider countryside. Kent County Council itself owns or manages several country parks and picnic sites, offering opportunities for recreation, relaxation and education.

Kent also has 2,075 hectares of “Open Access” land.³⁴ The right to access this land is limited to walkers, but also allows a number of ‘advised activities’, including running. Alongside this there are 200 registered village greens and 109 parcels of registered common land.

Approximately 75% of Kent’s coastline has linear public access on Public Rights of Way, cycle routes and promenades, all of which are available to walkers. The promoted Saxon Shore Way stretches for 160 miles, giving access to the majority of the coast. The Kent coast is also a pilot area for the “English Coastal National Trail” and will be one of the first areas to have a complete coastal route.

People walk for a variety of reasons. This can be to get to work or school, to exercise a dog or for leisure and to enjoy the countryside. Each of these different groups of walkers has slightly different needs and demands.

Those who walk for leisure choose a range of places, including woodland, riverside, rural and urban parks, the coast and farmed landscapes. Information on routes is important. For those who may not be regular walkers or who lack confidence, guides and promoted routes are particularly important, for example the range of material promoted through Explore Kent, including the popular ‘Walks in Kent’ series. Those more familiar with the countryside are likely to explore less well-used paths and value choosing routes independently. Explore Kent’s interactive map is a popular resource for this market, and is used to design personalised walks.

Nearly 76,000 Kent residents also walk to work.³⁵ Our research showed that information is particularly important in encouraging people to use paths to get to work, school or shops. Not knowing where routes go was the main factor deterring people, and in this regard destination information can be useful. National research by Lancaster University³⁶ also found that preparing to walk somewhere was often more complex than driving. These users value good surfacing and safety.

Dog walking is a significant motivation for walking and, according to Natural England, dog walking accounts for 42% of all walkers.³⁷ People in lower socio-economic groups are more likely to walk with a dog than without one.³⁸ Routes without stiles, woodland paths and areas where dogs can run free without livestock are popular, and dog walkers are more likely than non-dog walkers to choose the countryside for their walks.³⁹

The rights of way network undoubtedly represents an exceptional resource for walking. If resources were allocated equally across such a large network, this would result in a severe dilution of impact. Expenditure is therefore prioritised. To achieve this, Kent County Council has adopted an intelligence-led approach based on the understanding of customers’ needs

³⁴ Land designated through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 which, after enactment in October 2005, gave new public access rights to land defined as mountain, moor, heath, down and registered commons. Information about access land in England is available from Natural England at www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

³⁵ 75,698, 11.6% of the working population, excluding those who work from home Census 2001

³⁶ Lancaster University (2011), *Understanding Walking and Cycling*

³⁷ Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) 2010-2011

³⁸ Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) 2009-2010

³⁹ Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) 2009-2010

and wants. Prioritisation will also more effectively target resources to meet wider strategic objectives, including Kent's 'Bold Steps' of supporting the Kent economy, tackling disadvantage and putting the citizen in control, as well as supporting sustainable travel and contributing to 'Growth Without Gridlock', 'Vision for Kent' and Local Transport Plan 3.

One of the biggest barriers to walking is a lack of information, and there is constant strong demand from users for more information. Explore Kent provides many promoted walking routes across the County. Evidence shows that promoted circular walks are not only a successful way of supporting countryside walking, they provide a valuable contribution to rural economies. The needs of different types of walkers will be provided for with targeted and customer orientated information, including internet and mobile communication technology. The County Council must be innovative and forward thinking in providing information at minimal cost.

There are also economic gains to be made through promoting walking as part of the tourism offer of Kent and marketing the existing range of walking routes to key target markets. Local destinations can also make better use of the promoted walking resources on their doorstep to support their marketing.

The accessibility of routes is very important, not least to support use by the widest range of people, including those with mobility impairments. Our research has shown it makes a huge difference to local communities, with a clear request from Parish Councils to improve route accessibility. Better, more accessible routes also encourage use by infrequent walkers, and good quality routes add to the rural visitor economy offer. Increasing accessibility also encourages walking as part everyday life, providing safe and direct routes to schools and community facilities.

The **Service** will continue to make the Kent countryside more accessible and support will continue to be given to organisations offering health walks and guided walks. The PROW and Access Service will also work with developers to ensure that new developments are designed to accommodate walking.

Our Priority Walking Objectives

- Make promoted routes as accessible as possible and promote them to a wide audience
- Empower local communities with information so they can prioritise resources on routes important to them
- Retain community involvement as a key element of service delivery and continue to develop the Countryside Wardens Scheme expanding the roles of individual wardens, linking with Sustrans to include cycling wardens
- Ensure new developments encourage and provide for walking and cycling, including links to the wider countryside
- Widen the audience for walking, including under-represented groups
- Deliver the needs of customers through developing new routes and improvements in areas of demand using data from customer, organisations and local communities
- Work with Visit Kent to strongly promote the countryside recreation offer of Kent to key markets both locally and in London and Northern Europe
- Lead a strategic approach to expand the leisure walking and cycling market in Kent in order to increase economic benefit, including improving understanding of the resource and development needs
- Work with transport partners to ensure information is available at key gateways, including the Port of Dover, Manston Airport and International Rail Stations

- Officers will proactively seek opportunities to improve the accessibility of the network, following consultation with local landowners and parishes
- Establish greater provision of quality and promotable routes in the areas surrounding Ramsgate, Ashford, Folkestone, Dartford and Gravesham.

How walkers have been supported in accessing the Kent countryside

- 6,115 fault reports were processed in 2011-2012.
- The Explore Kent walking pages are regularly refreshed and subsequently received an increase in demand of 39% between 2010 and 2012.
- The Walking to Health Initiative and Explore Kent Guided Walk database offer guided walks at various locations across the county which provides a detail on the level of required fitness and expected limitations on the routes.
- In addition to nearly £800,000 worth of capital infrastructure projects delivered in 2011-2012 a further £418,659 was secured from external funding to deliver projects over and above the statutory management. Amongst others, this included a new route to Capel le Ferne primary school.



Cycling



In 2011 the London School of Economics reported “*considerable evidence*” that participation in cycling is increasing.

Evidence shows that there is strong latent demand for family-friendly cycle routes in Kent

The Benefits of Cycling

- Contributes to tourism and local economies
- Is good exercise and contributes to personal health and well-being
- Can be a cheap and fun family day out
- Reduces transport costs
- Requires far less space for routes and parking compared to motor vehicles
- Saves energy
- Causes no air or noise pollution

"Thank you for the professional approach and advice on the layout of new routes and how they can be achieved at the former Northfleet Works site."

Lafarge

People cycle for many reasons; for leisure, for sport and to go about their day-to-day business.

In 2009 the Department for Transport estimated that 42% of the UK population aged over five owned a cycle. In 2011 the London School of Economics reported "*considerable evidence*" that participation in cycling is increasing, citing that across the UK 3.7m bikes were sold, 1.3m people became cyclists and 208 million cycle journeys were taken in 2010.⁴⁰

Predictions suggest that cycling for leisure is also set to grow⁴¹. The success of the Team GB cyclists in the Olympics, can only further boost the predicted uptake. In South East England there are an estimated 18 million annual domestic leisure cycling trips.⁴² Although, according to our research, cycling is the main activity for only 9% of visitors to the Kent countryside, cycle counter data on Kent's leisure routes records steady and increasing participation. Our experience and research shows that good quality off-road routes are always very popular after construction and tap into what is clearly a strong latent demand for family and leisure cycling. This is clearly demonstrated by the 61,000 trips recorded on the newly upgraded Royal Military Canal cycle route in a 13 month period. There is also strong demand for cycling information on Explore Kent and, between May 2011 and May 2012, the cycling section of Explore Kent received over 139,000 visits.

The recent Department for Transport "Active People"⁴³ survey showed that 12% of adults cycle for at least 30mins at least once a month in Kent. The highest ranking authority for cycling activity in Kent, is Dover at 16%, with the lowest results coming from Dartford and Shepway at 8%. It is hoped the recent creation of cycling routes in both the low ranking authority areas will increase activity.

The needs of cyclists will vary depending on the purpose of the trip and the experience and confidence of the cyclist. Commuters value direct, well-signed, smooth tracks linking essential services and destinations. Traffic free, well surfaced routes are particularly important for infrequent leisure cyclists and family groups, whilst more experienced cyclists who are more confident cycling with traffic will use country lanes and the road network. Mountain bikers will seek a variety of rough and challenging routes.

Kent has a range of routes to cater for all types of cyclist. Alongside the road network, cyclists can use Kent's 504 miles (812 kilometres) of dedicated cycle network, three National Cycle Routes and five Regional Routes as well as 698miles (1123 kilometres) of bridleways, restricted byways and byways. Although cycling is not permitted on Kent's 3581 miles of footpaths, some do get used for this purpose, and this perhaps highlights areas where there is a need for more cycling provision.

⁴⁰ Dr Alexander Grous, (2011) *The British Cycling Economy, 'Gross Cycling Product' Report*, London School of Economics

⁴¹ Tourism South East (2006); *The Volume and Value of Walking and Cycling in South East England* – original data from Sustrans and The Ramblers Association

⁴² Tourism South East (2006); *The Volume and Value of Walking and Cycling in South East England*

⁴³ Local area walking and cycling statistics, Sport England/DfT 2010-2011

Kent has several promoted cycle routes, many of which offer traffic free cycling. Popular routes include the Viking Coastal Trail in Thanet, the Oyster Bay Trail at Herne Bay, the Crab and Winkle Way through the Blean woodlands, the route between Penshurst Place and Tonbridge Castle. The popular 12 ½ mile circuit around Bewl Water is just across the County border in Sussex.

In response to public demand for traffic free cycling the **PROW and Access Service** has worked with partners to provide new cycling routes. The Royal Military Canal was upgraded in 2010 and now provides a linear route of 6 Miles. In 2011 the Sheerness Way and Isle of Harty Trail were opened on the Isle of Sheppey, along with the Great Stour Way and Pilgrims Cycle Trail from Canterbury. In the Thames Gateway growth area, work has been completed to extend the Darent Valley cycle route and progress to establish a Thameside path continues.

Kent also has some premier cycle facilities. Bedgebury Forest arguably offers some of the best family and mountain biking facilities in the South East, with cycle hire, over 7.4 miles (12 Kilometres) of single-track mountain biking, and a professionally-designed 'Freeride' area with challenging jumps. The increasing popularity and demand for off-road cycling is evident by the large number of visitors, particularly at weekends. Cyclopark, near Gravesham, opened in May 2012 and offers a road race track, BMX track and mountain bike track. Fowlmead Country Park near Deal is now well established and offers a variety of cycling routes and regularly hosts national and international road races.

Of the cyclist user types, mountain bikers are perhaps the least well served as, although all bridleways, restricted byways and byways are available to them, this network can be fragmented. The variable quality of surfacing also reduces the amount of routes suitable for some of these users and there are few promoted routes.

Through the Local Transport Planning process the Government is asking local authorities to set targets to increase cycling as an alternative to car travel, especially for short journeys. Kent County Council has such a target within the Local Transport Plan 3, with a cycling strategy identifying priorities. Some District Councils have also adopted cycling strategies. These strategies are supported by the emerging Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), which seek to ensure sustainable development, in which cycle routes are a key element. The London School of Economics study demonstrates the need to create cycle friendly communities and transport systems and in therefore linking to the planning system and development of the growth areas is particularly important.

The conclusive layer of cycle routes now mapped and digitised by KCC has enabled intelligent investment and, for the first time, a dedicated maintenance programme. The continuation of this maintenance programme will be essential in encouraging cycling activity. Other



successful projects include work-travel planning, which demonstrates to employees the opportunities available to them to get to work sustainably.

Creating and promoting new routes to schools will also help to address 'school run' issues and support the longer term cultural shift to choosing cycling for short journeys. A number of routes serving schools have been identified through our consultation and further routes will be developed.

Cycling safety is currently high on the agenda for national Government with funding being made available to specifically address areas of concern. It is important that the County Council seizes this opportunity to address concerns raised by residents.

Significant economic benefits could be achieved through developing more fully the leisure cycling market in Kent. This is the largest potential market for cycling, and includes general recreational cycling and families. In 2009 Christchurch College Canterbury were commissioned to investigate the potential economic benefits of the general leisure market in Kent and in particular to show what products, infrastructure and marketing brought the greatest economic impact.⁴⁴

The research gave a very clear insight into demand, the requirements of cyclists, infrastructure needs and marketing preferences and information on customer segmentation. The clear 'headline' message was that to attract more people and the most economically valuable groups, traffic free routes were essential.

"Routes need to be traffic free to attract repeat visits and marketed as traffic free to attract first-time visitors"
Canterbury Christ Church University (2011)

Kent has an enviable resource of traffic free routes and top class cycling facilities. There is great potential to develop Kent into a cycling destination, to the benefit of Kent's economy

Other essential factors to attract the leisure cycling market include:

- Clear, coherent and visible signing and waymarking
- Route maps and guidebooks available; inexperienced groups like to feel route is "tried and tested"
- Marketing which appeals to inexperienced cyclists;
- Circular routes, that have the potential to become attractions in their own right
- Accurate distance and "cycling time" information
- Routes of between 15 and 30 miles
- "Connectedness" to nearby villages, towns and holiday accommodation, linking out of urban areas
- Routes in and through pleasant scenery and surroundings

⁴⁴ SPEAR, Canterbury Christ Church University (2011), *A Systematic Review of Evidence for the Local Impacts of Tourism and Leisure Cycling*, Report for Kent County Council

The relatively flat river corridors of the Thames, Medway, Darent and Stour offer great potential for developing family friendly and commuter routes, linking towns and rural communities. The low-lying areas around Swale, Thanet and the Romney Marsh also offer excellent opportunities for increasing the leisure cycling market, particularly for the family market.



Kent already has good infrastructure, including many traffic free routes and this, alongside the other facilities such as Cyclopark and Bedgebury, presents an opportunity for Kent to establish itself as a leisure cycling destination.

How cyclists have been supported in accessing the Kent countryside

- Working with our partner District and Borough authorities a series of town Walking and Cycling maps are now available for numerous Kent towns. These demonstrate the ease of cycling from homes to key destinations.
- In April 2012 “Discover Kent by Bike”, a definitive guide to recreational cycle routes in Kent was published and printed.
- Through partnership working and significant external funding numerous routes have been created or improved to enhance the cycling offer across the county. These include; the Pilgrims Cycle Trail, Darent Valley Path, The Isle of Harty Trail, Sheerness Way, The Royal Military Canal, The Oyster Bay Trail and Great Stour Way.

Our Priority Cycling Objectives

- Improve walking and cycling provision in the Growth Points and Growth Areas, including enhancements to National Cycle Route 1 in the Thames Gateway and the creation of new multi-user routes in Ashford
- Support increasing cycling for everyday journeys, including seeking improvements to routes serving transport hubs, large employers and schools, and connecting cycling networks
- Lead a strategic approach to expand the leisure walking and cycling market in Kent in order to increase economic benefit, including improving understanding of the resource and development needs
- Deliver a continued increase of traffic-free routes and a better connected network to support the development of tourism, family and recreational cycling
- Work with transport partners to ensure information is available at key gateways, including the Port of Dover, Manston Airport and International Rail Stations
- Work with highway partners in the delivery of cycle safety schemes as identified by Kent residents

Horse Riding and Carriage Driving

Equestrians themselves state that they need:

- A better connected riding network
- More information on where to ride
- Improvements in infrastructure

Although a minority leisure pursuit, demand remains high

"I deal with all the authorities across the South East. I have to say that Kent County Council (PROW and Access Service) in terms of their communication, the publications they put out, their website, their programmes of work on the ground, their understanding of statutory orders is head and shoulders above the rest"

SE Region Representative, British Horse Society

"Thank you for your sterling work. It [a new bridleway] really is a pleasure to ride on and I am sure most appreciated by walkers and cyclists too."

Horse rider in West Kent

The Benefits of Equestrianism

- Significant contribution to the rural economy
- A fun and invigorating way to explore the countryside.
- A great form of physical exercise.
- Good for improving personal confidence.
- Facilities for disabled people to ride and gain freedom



Equestrianism encompasses a range of activities, making a valuable contribution to the fabric of rural society, and offering a wide range of people, including young children, an excellent way of exploring the countryside.

Recreational riding includes a number of activities including hacking, trekking and carriage driving. Hacking and general riding are the most popular, with our research showing trips on bridleways and roads last between 1 ½ - 3 hours.

Around 2.4 million people ride in the UK. Nationally, the equine industry directly employs 50,000 people, with £3.4 billion spent annually on horses and riding, and 45 million paid-for lessons taking place every year.⁴⁵

Equestrian activity contributes an estimated £100 million to the Kent economy; 13% of the land-based value in Kent, with between 30,000 and 40,000 horses in the County.⁴⁶ There are 26 BHS affiliated riding clubs and five British Horse Driving Trials Association affiliated clubs. It is difficult to quantify the number of horses and riders in Kent, however around 6%⁴⁷ of Kent's population are thought to ride. Riding schools are the most visited of the equestrian pages on Explore Kent, providing a direct link to supporting equestrian businesses.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of certainty over levels of participation, compared with walking and cycling, horse riding is statistically a minority leisure activity, but one which continues to appeal and retain demand.⁴⁸

Research from a range of sources, including DEFRA⁴⁹ and Kent County Council indicates that horse riders and carriage drivers need:

- A better connected riding network
- More information on where to ride
- Improvements in the quality of infrastructure, including the removal of obstructions and better route surfaces

Horse riders in Kent have access to 698 miles (1,123 kilometres) of bridleways, byways and restricted byways. Despite this seemingly long length of routes, compared with neighbouring counties the percentage of the rights of way network available for equestrians is low. In Kent the figure is 16%; in Surrey it is 35% and East Sussex 21%.

Even taking into account permissive rides, the level of access is still low. Rights of way suitable for equestrians may be long distances apart, meaning that equestrians have to use the road network, or routes can be broken by busy roads or railways. Many areas which walkers can access freely, such as woodland, riverside, common land, access land and parks provide no, or limited, access for equestrians. Carriage drivers are even more constrained, being limited to byways and restricted byways. These form only 5% of the rights of way network, and therefore carriage drivers must rely heavily on rural lanes.

Toll rides provide an important additional resource for rides. Kent has an impressive network of such rides, both for riding and carriage driving, giving access to private estates and Forestry Commission woodland. Toll rides are provided through landowner agreements and are

⁴⁵ Defra (2005), Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales

⁴⁶ Kent County Council (2002); The Land Based Economy of Kent

⁴⁷ Kent County Council (2002); The Land Based Economy of Kent

⁴⁸ British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) (2006); National Equestrian Survey 2006; Tourism South East (2001); A Strategy for Equestrianism Tourism in the South East

⁴⁹ DEFRA (2004); A Report of the Research of the Horse Industry in Great Britain

administered by the Toll Rides (Off-Road) Trust (TROT). Despite a membership fee being required, the scheme continues to significantly increase new riding areas as well as providing additional income for landowners. There are currently forty-two toll rides in Kent, of which six are open to carriage drivers.

An attractive and popular resource which Kent has, despite some local restrictions, is access to beach riding.

Research into where there are high numbers of horses, along with the location of livery yards, stables and riding schools is ongoing and provides valuable information. This, alongside an equestrian working group of the Kent Local Access Forum, has identified several locations where improvements are needed. These include increasing access to woodland, including the Blean, Bedgebury and Lyminge Forests, upgrading the North Downs Way and a 'greenway' in Elham Valley. The Pilgrim's Way, Wye downs, Bedgebury Forest and around Meopham are areas which have been identified as needing more access for carriage drivers.

Improvements to the rights of way network will be prioritised, using this knowledge of Kent's areas of need and demand and the concerns of Kent's horse riders. The bridleway and restricted byway network will be extended and fragmentation reduced, with particular attention given to road crossings and rider safety. The **PROW and Access Service** will proactively support the Toll Rides (Off-Road) Trust in expanding permissive rides. Restricted byways are particularly beneficial to support carriage driving and, where an opportunity arises to upgrade a route to a bridleway, consideration will be given to whether a restricted byway would offer wider public benefit.

In response to the first Countryside Access Improvement Plan, in 2007 the County Council produced the brochure 'Ride Kent' to promote horse riding and support the equine industry. The Explore Kent website also shows the best areas of the county to visit on horseback, currently promoting seven riding areas. Explore Kent will continue to support the equestrian industry through providing information.

Improvements in infrastructure, such as inaccessible equestrian gates, will also be prioritised.

How horse riding and carriage driving have been supported in accessing the Kent countryside

- Working with local landowners we have secured the upgrade of a number of Public Footpaths to Public Bridleway status increasing the availability of routes for equestrians.
- Horse Riding has a dedicated page within the Explore Kent website and includes up to date information on riding routes, riding schools and links to other useful sites and information.
- A definitive guide to horse riding in Kent, "Ride Kent" was produced in 2007.
- Working with the British Horse Society, officers have experienced first hand training on the sort of issues experienced by equestrians to help design improvements with riders in mind.

Our Priority Equestrian Objectives

- Improve and develop the content and functionality of the "Explore Kent" website to raise awareness of Kent's Walking, Cycling, and Horse riding provision and access to Green Space
- Continue to develop understanding of safety issues for equestrianism and deliver safety improvements including improvements to Highway verges
- Continue to improve equestrian infrastructure and develop new routes in target areas identified by riders.

Motorised vehicles

"The permit system is really good, KCC should be given a lot of credit, they should be applauded for producing a system that provides a balanced solution for all."

Kent resident (byway user)

The responsible use of motorised vehicles on public byways is a legitimate activity. Nationally it is very much a minority activity, with recent surveys indicating that nationally only 0.3% of people participate, with less than 0.1% of Kent residents participating.⁵⁰

In Kent, motorised vehicle rights have a patchy distribution of 138 miles (222 kilometres) of byways, which account for 3% of Kent's Public Rights of Way network. Of the 102 byways in Kent, only 21 are considered to be physically inaccessible by 4x4 vehicles. 28 are subject to Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's).

In a Defra report in 2005, Kent was not identified as a destination for attracting visitors from outside the area.⁵¹ However, recent work by in the Medway Gap north of Maidstone has identified that users do choose to come Kent from outside of the county.

Following the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act in 2006, the public right of way network available for motorised vehicles has been reduced. Routes formally designated as Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPPS) were reclassified as Restricted Byways, with rights only for non-motorised vehicular use.

Public vehicular use of the Public Rights of Way network is often considered by other users to be disruptive, noisy and damaging to the environment.

While there are many responsible users, and several Kent associations promote responsible use of byways, in some areas there have been unwelcome levels of illegal use of motor vehicles on Public Rights of Way and areas accessed from them. This can cause distress both to local residents and lawful users, as well as damaging path surfaces and surrounding land, including on occasion sites protected for nature conservation.

There is no doubt that the cost of maintaining Kent's byway network is disproportionate when compared to non vehicle routes. Although the status of byway infers particular suitability of a route for use by equestrians and pedestrians inevitably maintenance must be to a standard that supports the continued use by vehicles and this requires a stronger construction. Private "pay and play" tracks are better suited to providing the adventure sought by these users and there are a number of such off-road tracks throughout Kent, catering for a range of activities, including 4x4 and motorcycle scrambling.

DEFRA's "Making the Best of Byways" guidance has been produced to assist highway authorities in addressing problems of conflict between users, poor surface conditions and increases in byway use.

⁵⁰ Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) 2009-11

⁵¹ Research project report on project on motorised vehicles using byways open to all traffic, DEFRA 2005.

The guidance advises that the following factors should be considered in resolving byway problems:

- Conflicts between users
- The local rights of way improvement plan
- The durability of the byway
- The condition of the byway
- The use of the byway
- Hedgerow and tree protection
- The heritage of the byway
- Any ecological sensitivity associated with the byway
- The management approach

The advice suggests that co-operation with organised groups interested in this type of activity can encourage responsible use and help with the cost of maintaining the network. In Kent a byway working group has been established involving representatives from user groups and interested parties such as Parish Councils, Kent Police and Kent County Councillors. The group advises on appropriate management for those byways causing most concern. It is hoped that the Byway Working Group will provide sustainable solutions to the issues arising from motorised vehicle use.

A database exists for all of Kent's byways, detailing their use, condition, past maintenance and historical issues. The up-keep of management information using Kent's Countryside Access Management System (CAMS)⁵² helps to manage surfacing issues, and recording illegal usage on routes other than byways will help to improve conditions for legitimate users.

The use of TRO's is an option for protecting byways; however, their use constrains legitimate legal rights and causes a burden for policing. DEFRA guidance encourages the use of temporary orders for those byways which suffer from seasonal damage. The adoption of this approach has been largely successful although some damage to restrictive infrastructure has occurred.

Our Priority Motorised Vehicle Objectives

- Work with User groups to protect and enhance Byway infrastructure for the benefit of all users
- Ensure provision and information is made for recreational vehicular use across the County.

⁵² CAMS is a data and map management system which supports maintaining rights of way, and holds detailed information on paths, path infrastructure, surface details and maintenance.

Section 2: Use, Demand and Public Benefit in Under-Represented Groups

Introduction

Certain groups in the population are under-represented amongst users of the countryside and outdoor spaces. People from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds (BAME), disabled people and younger adults visit the countryside less frequently than the wider population.

The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000, (CROW Act 2000) requires this plan to assess the accessibility of Public Rights of Way to blind or partially-sighted people, and others with mobility problems. Section 69 of the CROW Act 2000 also makes amendments to the Highways Act 1980 in order to improve access to the countryside for those with mobility problems.

Alongside this, the authority is legally bound by the Equality Act 2010, which puts all equality law into one place to form a single Public Sector Equality Duty. It sets out to give consistent rights and protection to people from different groups under nine equality characteristics.⁵³ Disabled people also have additional protection.

Kent County Council's Equality Strategy sets out that County Council will make services accessible to all people, provide clear, meaningful and accessible information about council services, work with partners in consulting and communicating with all sections of the community, monitor take-up and evaluate services.

An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be. To do this we need to understand better the needs of people.

An inclusive, 'countryside for all' approach does not necessarily exclude under-represented groups, but neither does it actively promote to these groups or work to break down the barriers which prevent them from visiting the countryside.

Research into provision for under-represented groups in the countryside⁵⁴ has made recommendations for ways in which service providers can improve. A key area is to improve the language, imagery and communication to under-represented groups. The Explore Kent brand is a powerful tool through which to communicate and champion greater uptake of countryside access by these groups.

Our Priority Objectives:

- Within the **PROW and Access Service** develop 'champions' to further the understanding of the needs of under-represented groups. Use this understanding to promote engagement of these groups in the countryside, both within Kent County Council and with stakeholders and partners.

⁵³ Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation

⁵⁴ "What about us?": Diversity Review evidence – part two Challenging perceptions: provider awareness of under-represented groups (CRN95)

People with a Disability

There is great diversity amongst people with a disability. Disability takes many different forms and has an impact on people's lives in many different ways. The term 'disability' covers a wide range of conditions, including mobility difficulties, blind or partially sightedness, learning difficulties and mental health problems.



18% of people with a disability never visit the natural environment, compared with 8% of the non-disabled population

Accessing the natural environment gave people with disabilities a sense of continuity between their disabled and non-disabled selves, and a sense of achievement.

Some disabilities are permanent; some only affect people intermittently. While some people have lived with their disability from birth, most people are those who develop impairments in the course of their life, or are simply getting older and more frail.

Using the broadest definition of people with a disability, the 2001 Census recorded that 214,798 Kent residents had long term limiting illness, equating to 16.5% of the population.

Applying this to 2011 population estimates would mean this total could now total approximately 232,000 Kent residents.⁵⁵ More people claiming disability related allowances live in east Kent, especially in Thanet, Shepway and Dover local authority areas where the proportion is higher than the national average.⁵⁶ In addition, Kent's population of elderly is set to increase at a faster rate than both the national and regional average, increasing by 35.2% between 2010 and 2035.⁵⁷ An inevitable consequence of this is that the number of the population with a disability will increase.

The MENE research has shown that 18% of people with a disability never visit the natural environment, compared with 8% of the non-disabled population. Overwhelmingly the reasons for not visiting the countryside are related to their condition, with 'old age', 'poor health' and 'a physical disability' given by 92% of respondents as the reason for not visiting.⁵⁸ It would seem, therefore, that a disability presents a significant barrier to visiting the natural environment.

Research into under-represented groups in the countryside⁵⁹ found that disabled people perceived the countryside as inherently rewarding and beneficial to the same degree as the wider population, especially for the psychological benefits. Research in Kent also found that disabled people visited the countryside to enjoy the views, landscape and to relax.⁶⁰ In addition, accessing the natural environment gave people with disabilities a sense of continuity between their disabled and non-disabled selves, and a sense of achievement.

However, there are a range of barriers which make visiting the natural environment more difficult for people with a disability. The most obvious are physical barriers, created through inadequate infrastructure, such as poor quality paths, stiles and other obstructions or lack of facilities such as disabled toilets. Research in Kent found the three most important factors for encouraging more frequent visits to be more accessible routes, facilities, toilets and car parking and more detailed information. The completed network survey provides vital information for assessing where there are areas that could be improved. Added to this is the information received from the Parish Council questionnaires, advising where enhancements would be of most benefit to their communities. Physical restrictions are, however, only part of the reason disabled people are more reluctant to visit the countryside.

⁵⁵ Kent County Council Research and Evaluation Statistical Bulletin, Disability in Kent (April 2012)

⁵⁶ Total disability claimants as % of total population, August 2011, Thanet 11.3%, Shepway 10.4%, Dover 9.6%, nationally 8.3%, South East 6.4%

⁵⁷ This compares to 34.7% for the South East region and 28.4% for England. Kent County Council Research and Evaluation Statistical Bulletin, 2010-based Sub National Population Projections for Kent (March 2012)

⁵⁸ 'old age' 26%, 'poor health' 42% and 'a physical disability' 34%

⁵⁹ "What about us?": Diversity Review evidence – part one Challenging perceptions: under-represented groups' visitor needs, Natural England (CRN94)

⁶⁰ 2003 postal survey to assess the needs and demands of disabled people in accessing the countryside

How disabled people have been supported in accessing the Kent countryside

- Since the commencement of the CAIP 3019 stiles have been removed or replaced with gates.
- Kent County Council has historically been at the forefront of researching the needs for this group. Four local 'Diversity Review' action-based research projects were commissioned by Natural England in response to the Rural White Paper (2000), including the Kent-based 'By All Means' project.
- The Kent Outdoor Pursuits Disability Project has been working to increase access to the outdoor and rural environment, aiding 3500 people. The development of facilities and activities opens up opportunities for disabled people to enjoy the countryside and take part in informal sports. The project offers courses in cycling, walking, climbing, archery, Country Parks, sailing and rowing.
- The Walking to Health Initiative and Explore Kent Guided Walk database offer guided walks at various locations across the county which provides a detail on the level of required fitness and expected limitations on the routes.

Disabled people are more likely than the general population to be retired, unemployed or poor, more likely to live in urban areas and less likely to drive a car. Transport is therefore a key barrier and physically accessing the countryside presents more of a challenge.

Some disabled people perceive the countryside as threatening, leaving them feeling vulnerable due to the scarcity of provisions or a lack of awareness of whether such provisions exist at a location.⁶¹ Previous negative experiences can compound the sense that the countryside is somewhere that is not welcoming. Therefore access to information which details where to go, what to expect when they get there, and what to do at the site is important, enabling individuals to make their own informed decisions and increasing confidence in visiting the countryside. Following consultation with the Kent Association for the Blind, elements of the Explore Kent website have been restructured, to allow compatibility with software used by people with visual impairments.

The interactive map on Explore Kent can be used to identify limitations on walking routes for the more independently minded. This resource should be maintained with any improvements made with consideration for the needs of disabled people.

⁶¹ "What about us?": Diversity Review evidence – part one Challenging perceptions: under-represented groups' visitor needs, Natural England (CRN94)

Managed sites, such as Country Parks, with a good level of information, a range of facilities and welcoming on-site staff, provide high levels of support for disabled people seeking to access the countryside. In common with the general population, some disabled people will seek a greater challenge and it is therefore important not to generalise about what disabled people want. To meet this demand, the **PROW and Access Service** has produced 27 Walks for All, available from the Explore Kent website, which detail routes in the wider countryside.

Often it is easier to address physical issues than those that are sensory and mental. Most participants feel they are victims of tokenism, as very few facilities take into account the needs of people with sensory impairments or learning difficulties.

Our Priority Actions for Disabled People

- The content of Explore Kent will continue to be improved, including ensuring that an acceptable percentage of advertised events are inclusive for disabled people.
- Provide information on the accessibility of the whole journey to enable informed decision making
- Officers will proactively seek opportunities to improve the accessibility of the network, following consultation with local landowners and parishes
- Establish Community Champions that deliver an annual programme of presentations/engagements with specifically targeted groups
- Build on the existing knowledge within the **PROW and Access Service** to support disabled people and increase understanding of the needs to wider stakeholders and partners
- Work closely with health care professionals to promote the health benefits of using Public Rights of Way
- Use the “Countryside Access Good Design Guide” to consider disability in design.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Groups

In the 2001 Kent census, 3.1% (41,534 people) classified themselves as belonging to a black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) group. The majority of those people who stated a religion in the 2001 Census were Christian, with the second largest stated group being Sikh, at 0.6%.⁶² In the mid 2009 review⁶³ the total had risen to an estimated 7.6% of the population, at 107,100 people. Although the population is growing, the proportion of Kent's population is still lower than the England average of around 12%. The greatest numbers of BAME groups are located in North Kent in the boroughs of Dartford and Gravesham, where this population approaches the national average. A change in immigration law grants naturalisation and settlement status to retired and serving members of the British Army's Brigade of Gurkhas. In 2004 the Sagarmatha Gurkh Community was set up in Ashford and between 2002 and 2007, over 1700 new National Insurance numbers were allocated to people from Nepal, living in Kent.⁶⁴

Further work has been carried out by Kent County Council to classify the population based on the origin of their personal and family name.⁶⁵ This research, although not conclusive, does give some indication of the country of origin not available from any other data source, for example the number of Eastern European residents. This research suggests that excluding English, Celtic and Irish (forming 90% of the population), the dominant group is Western European (2.8% of the population) followed by Eastern European (1.7% of the population).



BAME populations are more likely to visit urban green spaces, with culture and transport being key barriers.

Research has shown that the BAME population tend not to visit the countryside as much as the non-BAME population. The MENE research has shown that almost a quarter of those who never visit the natural environment were from the BAME population⁶⁶ and, although this group makes up 12% of the national population, only 8% were frequent visitors to the natural environment. The Sport England Active People Survey also recorded that 15% of the non-white population of Kent took part in sport or active recreation on average 3 times a week,⁶⁷ compared to 22% of the white population.

⁶² 302124 people, 23% of Kent's population either stated 'no religion' or declined to answer

⁶³ Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimate mid-2009

⁶⁴ The Nepalese in Britain, The Runnymede Trust, 2008

⁶⁵ Using Mosaic Origins

⁶⁶ 24%

⁶⁷ The proportion of respondents that participated in sport and active recreation, at moderate intensity, for at least 30 minutes on at least 12 days in the last 4 weeks (equivalent to at least 3 times a week over the previous month). Active People Survey Oct 2010- Oct 2011

Research into under-represented groups in the countryside⁶⁸ has highlighted the key barriers to these groups accessing the countryside.

People from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to live in urban areas, and to be poorer than the general population. This is true in Kent where a higher proportion of Kent's ethnic population chose to live in urban Dartford and Gravesend. These reasons alone make them less likely to access the countryside due to the cost, time and transport issues. This is also borne out in the MENE research, which has shown that BAME populations which do visit the outdoors are more likely to visit urban locations and places closer to home.

There are also cultural differences, some ethnic minority communities may not have developed a cultural habit of going to the countryside, resulting in a lack of knowledge of recreational opportunities, or simply a lack of interest. The fear of prejudice, discrimination and racism in the countryside between themselves and predominantly white rural dwellers can also prevent visits, creating a sense that they will just not 'fit in'.

Historically rural spaces and information have tended to cater for the 'typical' countryside user; white, middle-aged and middle-class, compounding these barriers.

The MENE research also highlights differences between the reasons given for not visiting the countryside with, only 9% of BAME non-participants citing old age, poor health and disability as reasons for not visiting the countryside, compared with 41% of the white population. The most common reason, greater than in the white population, was 'too busy',⁶⁹ followed by more people stating 'not interested' or 'no particular reason'.⁷⁰

The Defra report 'Outdoors for All?'⁷¹ suggests various actions that local authorities could take, which include making sure promotional material is available in a range of formats and languages, avoiding stereotypes, working in partnership with a range of organisations and establish community outreach organisations extending staff and volunteer awareness and diversifying volunteer profile.

Our Priority Objectives for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority Groups

- Promotional material will be appropriately targeted to BAME groups and provided in alternative formats and languages as necessary
- Raise awareness throughout the Service and with wider stakeholders of best practice in engaging with BAME populations
- Improve walking and cycling provision in the Growth Points and Growth Areas, including enhancements to National Cycle Route 1 in the Thames Gateway and the creation of new multi-user routes in Ashford.

⁶⁸ "What about us?": Diversity Review evidence – part one Challenging perceptions: under-represented groups' visitor needs, Natural England (CRN94)

⁶⁹ 40% white compared with 57% non-white

⁷⁰ 30% in the BME population vs 21% in the white population, too busy given as a reason 40% in white vs 57% in BME

⁷¹ Outdoors for All? Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2008)

Younger Residents

In 2010 there were estimated to be 350,500 people under 19 living in Kent⁷², giving Kent a younger age profile than the national average. This group includes both children, adolescents and younger adults beginning their independent lives, and so encompasses a wide range of needs.

Younger adults tend to visit the countryside less than the general population. The MENE research has shown that younger people between 19 and 25 years of age, along with those over 65, were least likely to have visited the outdoors in the previous 7 days. These young adults are more likely to visit green spaces in urban areas rather than the countryside.

The lower representation of younger adults amongst countryside visitors is due to a range of factors. While lack of transport, money and time might be factors in younger adults not participating in countryside visits many, quite simply, are not at the stage of their lives where the countryside presents an appealing way to spend their leisure time.⁷³ While younger adults perceive the countryside as healthy, peaceful and natural, they are more likely than other under-represented groups to perceive these as negative characteristics. Those who do visit were seeking a range of experiences. Some wanted high-energy, challenging activities; others wanted to wander through the countryside on their own.

In order to better to assess the needs and use of the network by Kent's younger members of society, members of the Kent Youth County Council, Duke of Edinburgh Scheme participants, a class of pupils from Goudhurst School and focus group in Canterbury were consulted.

While generally participants had a good idea of where to look for information on ways to access the countryside, most were not regularly doing so. Working with the focus group



⁷² Mid Term 2010 Population Estimates, KCC, 2011

⁷³ "What about us?": Diversity Review evidence – part one Challenging perceptions: under-represented groups' visitor needs, Natural England (CRN94)

revealed that there was a perception that maps and guidebooks are for older people and not appealing to the younger market. When advised of the sort of activities that can be undertaken on rights of way, a significant number said that they would want further information on where they could go and that they would search the internet to find information. Research identified a requirement for more information to be made available via media formats attractive to a younger market.

Explore Kent's I-Phone App makes the countryside more accessible to younger adults.

In 2010 Explore Kent launched an I-phone app, which has proved to be very popular. Whilst it is not possible to know which sectors of the population are downloading the app, profiling of the Explore Kent customer base has shown a higher uptake by the young adult population than would be predicted by national research data,⁷⁴ suggesting that the Explore Kent offer is appealing to younger adults.

In contrast to national research, participants in the Kent consultation raised feeling safe as an issue and many described the feeling of safety that managed sites provide. Several of the Canterbury group described the desire to find more areas of 'secure wilderness' where they could walk away from other people, whilst at the same time feeling safe. Physical conditions such as stiles, gates, barriers and even muddy paths were not regarded as a deterrent, but clear signposted and waymarked paths were regarded as important.

Younger people have a higher dependency on others for transport. This was reflected in the Kent groups, where family walks and regular dog walking accounted for the largest use of the Public Rights of Way network. Compared with the average population, a larger proportion of young people had also been horse riding.⁷⁵ The Explore Kent customer has a higher number of families with young children than would be predicted by national research data, and the appeal of Explore Kent can be increased through providing information which is appealing to families.⁷⁶

The Kent focus groups also cited cycling as a popular activity. The County Council has secured external funding to continue to deliver the Bikeability programme to schools. Funding has been received to deliver training to 5000 children this year, and is set to increase for the next two years. Nationally 33% of children claimed to want to cycle to school, yet only 2% currently do,⁷⁷ demonstrating clear demand. The lack of good off-road cycling facilities was regularly mentioned as the main barrier.

Our Priority Objectives for Younger People:

- Develop traffic-free walking and cycling facilities, specifically to support school travel plans, the "Healthy Schools" initiative and the family recreational tourism market.

⁷⁴ Mosaic group I, which comprises a mix of young professionals, singles and students; 4.6% of Explore Kent customers vs 3.4% of Kent County Council area population.

⁷⁵ 7% advised they had ridden

⁷⁶ Mosaic group G, which comprises couples with young children; 11.1 of Explore Kent customers vs 11.8% of Kent County Council area customers.

⁷⁷ Walking and Cycling, links to schools, Sustrans, DfT, Cycling England (2006)

- Encourage country park sites to be developed as “gateways” for younger people to explore the wider countryside
- Continue to develop new media through Explore Kent, expanding this to cycling
- Work with the Bikeability programme to provide information to children on routes where they improve skills in safety.

Part 3: Implementation

Action Plan (Objective and Actions)

How the Plan is Prioritised.

A wide-ranging consultation exercise was carried out during 2007 and 2011 with local communities and user groups. The Action Plan below summarises those areas that local communities felt should be given priority and also demonstrates how those areas fit with the overarching priorities of the County Council as set out in the Vision for Kent and Bold Steps for Kent. The consultation provides us with an informed basis for establishing operational priorities and programmes of work that place the desires of citizens at the core of our decision making.

The need for the Service to secure the very best value for its customers from any investment made is essential. Programmes of work and specific schemes are therefore subject to a cost benefit analysis before resource is allocated to them. The cost benefit analysis was developed by the Service. It weights schemes on the basis of operational priorities, strategic objectives identified in this Plan and practical considerations relating to how easily the scheme can be delivered and its longer term impact on maintenance budgets.

The Main Objectives

Our research and evaluation of use and demand has given us a clear indication of what the people of Kent would like from its network of Public Rights of Way. From this research we have identified seven key themes to guide the process of improving opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding. This provides a framework for delivery through the Action Plan. The following actions will be prioritised in accordance with any funding opportunities that arise and through their ability to contribute towards the delivery of Bold New Steps and the Local Transport Plan.

Well Maintained Countryside Access

A large percentage of people questioned thought that a higher standard of path furniture (gates, bridges etc) should be a priority. This would encourage people to explore the countryside and encourage wider use of Public Rights of Way for their everyday journeys. Currently about 66% of the network is considered easy to use. Subsequent research in 2011 reported an increasing concern on the reduction to vegetation cuts introduced as a necessary response to recent budgetary constraints.

Objectives M1 to M8 will focus activity to “Tackle Disadvantage” and “Support the Economy”. They will raise the standard of furniture on paths and deliver a more accessible and useable network. Better signposting and waymarking, together with the installation of more informative destination signs in appropriate locations, will increase people’s confidence in using the rights of way network for everyday journeys. County Council promoted walks and rides will be maintained to a high standard making Kent an attractive destination for recreational tourism. Prioritisation of route maintenance will be influenced by local communities and increasing efficiency in the use of the volunteer countryside access wardens will ensure the up-keep of popular paths will be noticeably improved.

	Objective	Tackling Disadvantage	Growing the Economy	Putting the citizen in Control	Key Partners
M1	Improve the standard of PROW furniture through the application of asset management principles, the provision of quality materials and better design.	√	√	√	PCs LND VOL OTHR
M2	Use the “Countryside Access Good Design Guide” to consider disability in design.	√	√		OTHR DEV VOL
M3	Officers will proactively seek opportunities to improve the accessibility of the network, following consultation with local landowners and parishes	√	√	√	PCs VOL CMTY
M4	Work with User groups to protect and enhance Byway infrastructure for the benefit of all users			√	VOL OTHR
M5	Continue to improve equestrian infrastructure and develop new routes in target areas identified by riders	√	√	√	BHS VOL
M6	Make promoted routes as accessible as possible and promote them to a wide audience	√	√		CMTY VOL OTHR
M7	Empower local communities with information so they can prioritise resources on routes important to them	√	√	√	CMTY VOL PCs
M8	Effectively manage access land and open green space.	√		√	PCs VOL OTHR NE DC

Growth And Development

The Issue

Planned development in Kent both poses threats and provides opportunities to the existing Public Rights of Way network and public access to green space. Within the two Kent growth areas there are proposals for 80,000 new homes and the creation of over 100,000 jobs over the next 30 years. The location for these new homes will primarily be in The Thames Gateway, East Kent and Ashford. It is essential that rights of way in these areas are protected and opportunities to enhance the network for all users are taken. By demonstrating the opportunities that Public Rights of Way and open space offer, we will be contributing to the sustainability of new development and regeneration of these areas.

Objectives D1 to D6 focus on the provision of sustainable transport systems and high quality green space within new developments. Work will concentrate on those areas identified by communities and the LTP3 that reduce traffic congestion, improve safety and provide community recreational facilities. The existing rights of way network and provision of open green space will be enhanced as a consequence of new development, reducing the impact of the growing population, traffic and loss of land.

	Objective	Tackling Disadvantage	Growing the Economy	Putting the Citizen in Control	Key Partners
D1	Promote good design principles for new rights of way created as part of development schemes.	✓	✓		DEV DC
D2	Secure the protection and enhancement of the access estate through commenting on and influencing, emerging planning policy documents and planning applications that may impact on access to green space and the Public Rights of Way network.	✓	✓	✓	DEV DC PCs
D3	Improve walking and cycling provision in the Growth Points and Growth Areas, including enhancements to National Cycle Route 1 in the Thames Gateway and the creation of new multi-user routes in Ashford		✓		DEV DC PCs SUS
D4	Ensure new developments encourage and provide for walking and cycling, including links to the wider countryside	✓	✓	✓	DEV DC SUS
D5	Seize the opportunity to implement improvements to the walking, cycling		✓		DEV DC

	and horse riding network through major transport infrastructure schemes.				
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A More Sensible Network

The Issue

Research from the Kent Residents' Panel identified a number of reasons why people are not using the Public Rights of Way network for their daily journeys. The reasons included the fact that paths are not always in the right place, or do not always take the most direct route.

Kent's Public Rights of Way network is fragmented and poorly connected in certain parts of the county. This results in a heavy reliance on a relatively small percentage of the network. Carefully considered local and strategic changes would give greater opportunity for using the Public Rights of Way network for recreation and leisure, and for linking residential areas to local schools and services and the surrounding countryside.

Compared with other counties, the network also has a lower than average accessibility for horse riders and cyclists. By creating new or 'upgraded' paths this problem could be addressed.

We must develop the Public Rights of Way network for future generations to enjoy and ensure that walking and cycling routes provide real and sustainable alternatives to the private motor vehicle.

The objectives in this theme aim to work with partners to secure new routes in areas of high demand and where possible in direct response to customer requests. Horse riders and cyclists will have access to new paths supporting their recreational needs whilst at the same time supporting the needs of rural businesses. Kent will have a less fragmented network with routes going where people want them to. The Public Rights of Way network will give people the opportunity for healthier transport options, helping reduce the reliance on the private motor vehicle for short journeys.

	Objective	Tackling Disadvantage	Growing the Economy	Putting the Citizen in Control	Key Partners
N1	Deliver the needs of customers through developing new routes and improvements in areas of demand using data from customers, organisations and local communities	✓	✓	✓	DC PC's VOL CMTY KCAF
N2	Register requests for network improvements and projects coming	✓		✓	RA PCs

	from customers and community groups and organisations and prioritise these for action against this plan.				DC CMTY BHS KCAF
N3	Establish greater provision of quality and promotable routes in the areas surrounding Ramsgate, Ashford, Folkestone, Dartford and Gravesham.		✓		DEV DC
N4	Work closely with Natural England to establish the English National Coastal Trail and other routes requested by communities through the “Paths for Communities” grants.		✓	✓	NE CMTY
N5	Deliver a continued increase of traffic-free routes and a better connected network to support the development of tourism, and family and recreational cycling		✓		SUS CMTY PCs DC TSE VK KTA
N6	Support increasing cycling for everyday journeys, including seeking improvements to routes serving transport hubs, large employers and schools, and connecting cycling networks	✓	✓	✓	DEV DC CMTY
N7	Develop closer links to Parish Councils who may be in a position to support locally important projects through the Community Infrastructure Levy or a higher precept.		✓	✓	PCs DC CMTY DEV

Knowing What's Out There

The Issue

When asked, most people like “the great outdoors” and would like to spend more time exploring the Kent countryside. Surprisingly though, the majority of these people assume that the countryside is inaccessible and lack the confidence to go out walking, cycling or riding. Why is this? The main reason is quite simply that people don't know where to go. People need and want clear information about where to go to make the most of the countryside. An important way of giving people confidence, raising awareness and increasing use of Public Rights of Way is to provide them with the clear information they need to help them take that step. Better access on the ground must go hand in hand with good, easy-to-use information for everyone.

The objectives within this theme are set out to support the economic viability of Kent's rural communities and establish Kent as a destination for recreational tourism. The objectives will increase the participation of healthy outdoor recreation, and peoples understanding of what

can be discovered in Kent. This increased understanding will add value to the quality of life and enjoyment of living in Kent. The awareness of Kent's recreational resource will be known at local, national and international levels.

	Objective	Tackling Disadvantage	Growing the Economy	Putting the Citizen in control	Key Partners
I1	Maintain and update the county's Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way and Commons Register.			✓	CMTY DEV DC PCs
I2	Provide information, support and advice to providers to increase awareness and availability of Accessible Green Space	✓	✓		CMTY DC OTHR
I3	Improve and develop the content and functionality of the "Explore Kent" website to raise awareness of Kent's Walking, Cycling, and Horse riding provision and access to Green Space	✓	✓		CMTY DC OTHR
I4	Continue to develop new media through Explore Kent, expanding this to cycling		✓		OTHR
I5	The content of Explore Kent will continue to be improved, including ensuring that an acceptable percentage of advertised events are inclusive for disabled people.	✓			OTHR CMTY VOL
I6	Promotional material will be appropriately targeted to BAME groups and provided in alternative formats and languages as necessary.	✓			CMTY VOL
I7	Lead a strategic approach to expand the leisure walking and cycling market in Kent in order to increase economic benefit, including improving understanding of the resource and development needs		✓	✓	VK TSE DC KTA
I8	Ensure provision and information is made available for recreational vehicular use across the County		✓		VK TSE DC KTA
I9	Work with Visit Kent to strongly promote the countryside recreation offer of Kent to key markets both locally and in London and Northern	✓	✓	✓	VK TSE DC KTA

	Europe				
I10	Work with transport partners to ensure information is available at key gateways, including the Port of Dover, Manston Airport and International Rail Stations	✓	✓	✓	VK TSE DC KTA
I11	Work closely with health care professionals to promote the health benefits of using Public Rights of Way.	✓	✓	✓	HCP

Improving Safety

The Issue

Throughout our research, general concerns were raised about feelings of personal security and safety when using the rights of way network. The County Council takes its responsibility towards the health, safety and welfare of Kent residents very seriously. Although the majority of rights of way offer few safety concerns, there are areas, particularly where they meet roads or railways, which can. The Local Transport Plan already sets out a strategy for improving safety, but the following aims are in addition to those, and specifically relate to public footpaths, bridleways, byways and restricted byways.

The Plan includes objectives for this theme to increase the feeling of safety and security on the network. Paths which had previously not been used due to safety concerns will see increased usage as people gain confidence in the safer environments. A greater availability of safe walking and cycling routes around schools will reduce car congestion and safety concerns associated with the “school run”.

Schemes will be prioritised that deliver against LTP3, local concerns and National Government objectives.

	Objective	Tackling Disadvantage	Growing the Economy	Putting the Citizen in Control	Key Partners
ST1	Identify and investigate where the Public Rights of Way network can provide safe alternative routes to avoid people having to walk, ride, or cycle on busy roads.	✓	✓	✓	CMTY RA SUS DC PCs OTHR KCAF
ST2	Work with highway partners in the delivery of cycle safety schemes as identified by Kent residents	✓	✓	✓	CMTY PCs

ST3	Continue to develop understanding of safety issues for equestrianism and deliver safety improvements including improvements to Highway verges		✓	✓	BHS
ST4	Develop traffic-free walking and cycling facilities, specifically to support school travel plans, the "Healthy Schools" initiative and the family recreational	✓	✓	✓	HCP CMTY SUS DC PCs KCAF
ST5	Encourage country park sites to be developed as "gateways" for younger people to explore the wider countryside	✓	✓		DC HCP
ST6	Work with the Bikeability programme to provide information to children on routes where they improve skills in safety	✓			SUS VOL
ST7	Effectively manage resources through prioritising popular routes and routes where public safety is at risk.	✓	✓	✓	CMTY VOL
ST8	Work with Network Rail to improve Public Rights of Way level crossings at grade		✓		NR RA

Education And Respect For The Countryside

The Issue

The natural environment is under increasing pressure from human activity. Our research has highlighted an apparent lack of understanding of the public's rights and responsibilities associated with exploring the countryside on Public Rights of Way. Public bodies should make this information available to help protect the environment and the interests of land owners.

Land owners, tenants and land managers should also ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities for protecting Public Rights of Way through responsible land management. KCC is committed to working closely with these groups to ensure that they have the information they need in order to achieve this.

Objectives E1 to E4 will deliver appropriately located information panels and signage that will lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the Kent countryside. This will lead to the protection of land owner interests and the habitats and landscapes that make the Kent countryside so unique and popular.

	Objective	Tackling Disadvantage	Growing the Economy	Putting the Citizen in Control	Key Partners
E2	Target appropriate action in response to customer information to resolve any illegal obstructions or changes to rights of way			✓	RA LND
E3	Provide support and guidance to landowners, to ensure they are aware of their legal responsibilities.			✓	LND
E4	Provide information and relevant signs to encourage use and protect landowner interests.			✓	LND
E5	Aim to deliver wider environmental benefits through the delivery of improvement schemes using guidance included within the "Good Design Guide".		✓		DEV LND
E6	Support the development and implementation of the Kent Downs and High Weald AONB plans, the County Councils Environment Strategy and District Transport and Green Infrastructure Policies.	✓	✓	✓	AONB CMP

Delivering the Customer Service Strategy (formally referred to as "Working Smarter and Improving Our Customer Service")

The Issue

In order to realise the identified Improvement Plan objectives, and continually improve service to the public we must be prepared to explore use of new technology and react to meet our customer's changing demands. This theme will also address the statutory objectives for addressing the need of under-represented groups.

Our customer focus can be improved by involving and listening to user groups and individuals, and having a flexible attitude to the way in which we work. Emerging technology and best practice guidelines can all contribute to improving this service further.

The objectives are set out to deliver against the 5 areas of action within the Customer Service Strategy: **Understanding Customers, Connecting with our customers, empowering our staff, enhanced partnership, better designed service delivery**. This will be achieved through continued investment in staff training and new technology. Greater and more efficient use of the Countryside Access Wardens will both empower communities and assist in the increasing reduction to the public purse.

	Objective	Understand Our Customers	Connect with Customers	Empower staff	Enhance Partner ships	Improve Service Delivery	Key Partners
S1	Regularly review our policies and procedures to maintain efficiency and improve customer service.		√			√	CMTY PCs DC OTHR
S2	Embrace new technology and procedures in to delivering an effective service.	√	√			√	OTHR
S3	Build on the existing knowledge within the PROW and Access Service to support disabled people and increase understanding of the needs to wider stakeholders and partners	√	√		√	√	CMTY OTHR HCP
S4	Within the PROW and Access Service develop 'champions' to further the understanding of the needs of under-represented groups. Use this understanding to promote engagement of these groups in the countryside, both within Kent County Council and with stakeholders and partners.	√	√	√	√		CMTY OTHR
S5	Raise awareness throughout the Service and with wider stakeholders of best practice in engaging with BAME populations	√	√	√	√		CMTY OTHR VOL
S6	Retain community involvement as a key element of service delivery and continue to develop the Countryside Wardens Scheme expanding the roles of		√		√	√	CMTY VOL OTHR SUS

	individual wardens, linking with Sustrans to include cycling wardens.						
S7	Provide intelligent analysis of customer contact so that resources are focussed on those areas that matter to them		√			√	OTHR
S8	Ensure high levels of customer service are maintained through staff training					√	OTHR CMTY VK TSE KTA
S9	Secure external funding to support Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan objectives that can be invested in Kent's businesses and communities					√	OTHR CMTY SUS KTA VK TSE NE
S10	Use the customer profiling and Mosaic data provided in this report to continually improve our communication channels so our customers receive contact in the way they prefer	√	√				CMTY
S11	Establish Community Champions that deliver an annual programme of presentations/engagements with specifically targeted groups	√	√	√	√	√	CMTY VOL
S12	Increase understanding of the needs of groups that are under-engaged in access to the countryside, and champion this agenda across other service providers	√	√	√	√	√	CMTY VOL
S13	Continue to support the Kent Countryside Access Forum, and seek to ensure that it remains				√		KCAF VOL

	inclusive and effective						
S14	Increase understanding by businesses and service providers of how to offer a quality service to walkers, cyclists and others seeking outdoor recreation				√		OTHR CMTY VK TSE KTA
S15	Continue to act as a consultant for District Councils in the processing of Town & Country Planning Act Orders and actively seek to enter into agreements with the remaining District Councils (delivering against enhanced partnership).				√	√	DC PCs

Key Partners

LND	Landowners
DC	District/Borough Councils
DEV	Developers
VOL	Volunteers
RA	Ramblers' Association
BHS	British Horse Society
CMPs	Countryside Management Projects
AONBs	Area's of Outstanding Natural Beauty
KCAF	Kent Countryside Access Forum
PCs	Parish Councils
HCP	Health Care Providers
SUS	Sustrans Sustainable Transport Charity
KTA	Kent Tourism Alliance
TSE	Tourism South East
VK	Visit Kent
NE	Natural England
CMTY	Local Communities
NR	Network Rail



This plan is available in other formats, please call 08458 247 600.

Copies can be requested and the additional information referred to in the text can be obtained by writing to:-

The Countryside Access Service
Kent County Council
Invicta House
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1XX

Or by sending an e-mail to :- prow@kent.gov.uk

January 2013

